

# *Horizon*

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND ART

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'THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS'

*A letter from JOHN LEHMANN*

BRITISH AND AMERICAN NATIONALISM

*by BERTRAND RUSSELL*

NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS

II—THE SCEPTICISM OF ANATOLE FRANCE

*by IAN W. ALEXANDER*

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A MACMILLAN AUTHOR

## Charles Morgan

Charles Morgan was born in Kent on January 22nd, 1894. Educated from boyhood as a naval officer, he served in the Atlantic and the China Fleets. He went to the front with the Naval Brigade in October, 1914, took part in the defence of Antwerp, and was a prisoner of war for four years.

In 1919, he went to Oxford, where he took Honours in Modern History and was President of the O.U.D.S. In 1921, he joined the editorial staff of *The Times*, and, from 1926 until the outbreak of the present war, was principal dramatic critic to that newspaper. Meanwhile, his novels began to appear. *Portrait in a Mirror* (1929) founded a reputation which *The Fountain* established and *Sparkenbroke* and *The Voyage* confirmed, not in England alone but in the United States and throughout Europe. Charles Morgan is the only author to whom all three literary prizes, the 'Femina', the 'Hawthornden', and the 'James Tait Black', have been awarded. His work has appeared in fourteen languages and he has particular renown in France.

At the outbreak of the present war, Morgan abandoned all other work to serve at the Admiralty. In 1942 he commenced to contribute to *The Times Literary Supplement* a series of essays on contemporary values in life and literature. A selection from this series is the basis of his latest book *Reflections in a Mirror* (8s. 6d.).

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# 'THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS': A LETTER

*The Editor, HORIZON.*

SIR—It is gratifying to every admirer of France and French culture to read Philip Toynbee's article in the November issue of *HORIZON*, and to know that the hopes we have entertained that France's literary traditions were too strong to be withered by the defeat of 1940 have been so amply justified in the event. It is indeed an impressive balance sheet of literary activity that Mr. Toynbee draws up; but it is perhaps permissible to regret that he found it necessary to introduce a comparison to the disadvantage of British literary output during the same period. Without any attempt to list the works that would make it so 'agonizing' for him to contemplate a French investigator's research in London, he sweepingly declares that 'In the literature of these four years France has been incomparable and undeniably superior'. I do not think I am being unfair to Mr. Toynbee, if I take leave to doubt whether, during the few weeks he had been in Paris when he wrote the article, he had read more than a fraction of the French works he enumerates; it would overtax the energies of even the fastest reader, even if he had no official duties. And if he has not read them, how can he risk such a rash statement? I have not had the good fortune to come by more than a handful of recent French works, but I *have* read a high proportion of the outstanding works published over here, and noting them as I look round my library I am forced to challenge Mr. Toynbee's view. I do not claim that we are *better*; but that our record is so good that it would be foolish to attempt to judge between it and the French record. Mr. Toynbee says that in literary criticism France has the more distinguished war record: do such books as C. M. Bowra's *Heritage of Symbolism*, Jackson Knight's *Roman Vergil*, Lord David Cecil's *Hardy the Novelist*, William Gaunt's *The Pre-Raphaelite Tragedy*, E. M. W. Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture*, Dover Wilson's *Falstaff*, J. C. Smith's *Wordsworth*, W. H. Gardner's *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, and J. Bronowski's

*A Man Without a Mask* count for so little? Mr. Toynbee continues 'France has also been more productive in the essay', and cites five names. I will reply with five for Britain: Virginia Woolf's *The Death of the Moth*, Raymond Mortimer's *Channel Packet*, V. S. Pritchett's *In My Good Books*, Sir Osbert Sitwell's *Sing High, Sing Low*, Palinurus's *The Unquiet Grave*. Mr. Toynbee speaks, with just respect, of the period of 'privations, obstacles and tragedies' with which French writers had to contend; but for a period which in Britain was marked by similar difficulties, accentuated—as most of our French friends will agree—by total mobilization for the continuance of the war (and the liberation of France) it seems to me a matter of legitimate pride to be able to point to such works of outstanding scholarship, original thought and literary brilliance as R. G. Collingwood's *The New Leviathan*, G. M. Trevelyan's *English Social History*, A. L. Rowse's *Tudor Cornwall*, J. M. Thompson's *The French Revolution*, F. M. Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England*, Rebecca West's *Black Lamb, Grey Falcon*, V. Sackville-West's *The Eagle and the Dove*, C. V. Wedgwood's *William the Silent*, Duff Cooper's *David*, Peter Quennell's *Byron in Italy*; and such notable works of autobiography and reminiscence as William Plomer's *Double Lives*, Harold Nicolson's *The Desire to Please*, Elizabeth Bowen's *Seven Winters*, F. D. Ommayne's *The House in the Park*, Richard Hilary's *The Last Enemy* and Sir Osbert Sitwell's *Left Hand, Right Hand* (already published in the U.S.A. though delayed in London). Others, no doubt, would add other names; and would vary the list of memorable fiction, which for me includes Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, Elizabeth Bowen's *Look at All Those Roses*, Rosamond Lehman's *The Ballad and the Source*, Rex Warner's *The Aerodrome*, Graham Greene's *Ministry of Fear*, Henry Green's *Caught*, Rayner Heppenstall's *Saturnine*, Nigel Balchin's *The Small Back Room*, L. P. Hartley's *The Shrimp and the Anemone*, Evelyn Waugh's *Put out More Flags*, Sir Osbert Sitwell's *Open the Door*, William Sansom's *Fireman Flower*, C. S. Forester's *The Ship*, J. B. Priestley's *Daylight on Saturday*, F. L. Green's *Music in the Park*, H. E. Bates's *Fair Stood the Wind for France*, Anthony Thorne's *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, Gerald Kersh's *They Die with Their Boots Clean*, and Mr. Toynbee's own *School in Private*. Mr. Toynbee hesitates when he comes to poetry; and yet in the final balance poetry must weigh heavily, and English poetry has

nothing to fear with T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Edith Sitwell's *Street Songs* and *Green Song*, Laurence Binyon's *Burning of the Leaves*, Edwin Muir's *The Narrow Place*, C. Day Lewis's *Word Over All*, Stephen Spender's *Ruins and Visions*, Louis MacNeice's *Springboard*, David Gascoyne's *Poems*, and many other volumes of achievement and high promise from such young poets (several of whom were killed while they wrote) as Sidney Keyes, Terence Tiller, Alun Lewis, Roy Fuller, Kathleen Raine, Peter Yates, Laurie Lee, Vernon Watkins, Anne Ridler, Lawrence Durrell and John Heath-Stubbs. These lists could, obviously, be much further extended, and no one will forget that the war has not impeded the literary productivity of our two G.O.M. of literature, Shaw and Wells. In drama alone would a Britisher be prepared to consider that Mr. Toynbee had proved his case, for in Jean Paul Sartre (two of whose brilliant stories I had the honour of publishing in English translation some time before the war) it is clear that an altogether original theatrical genius has arisen; yet I seem to remember that though the British wartime stage has been more remarkable for superb revivals than original works, the latter have included witty and arresting pieces by Sean O'Casey, James Bridie, J. B. Priestley, Noel Coward, Terence Rattigan, Peter Ustinov and Rodney Ackland—not to mention the experiments in radio drama of Louis MacNeice and Edward Sackville-West. Mr. Toynbee has done a great service in producing such an animated and up-to-date piece of research as *The Literary Situation in France*; but I do not think that the so much to be desired cementing of cultural links between our two great countries is forwarded by turning a blind eye to what has been achieved in the country which for one fateful year survived alone in this hemisphere and fought on alone against barbarism. I confess that I can contemplate a French investigation of the matter without any sensation of being 'agonized'.—Yours, etc.

JOHN LEHMANN

[This letter may be regarded as the prelude to further attempts to elucidate the literary situation in both France and England. The Editor of HORIZON is now in Paris in search of fuller accounts of the French achievement and HORIZON will also shortly publish a tentative list of the hundred best books that have appeared in England since the war, which should be of interest both here and in France. That the French should think our books better than theirs, and that we should hold the opposite opinion is part of the sweet mirage of propinquity which is such a fortunate symptom in two countries who in culture, and in historical predicament, are really one.]

DYLAN THOMAS  
VISION AND PRAYER

Who  
Are you  
Who is born  
In the next room  
So loud to my own  
That I can hear the womb  
Opening and the dark run  
Over the ghost and the dropped son  
Behind the wall thin as a wren's bone?  
In the birth bloody room unknown  
To the burn and turn of time  
And the heart print of man  
Bows no baptism  
But dark alone  
Blessing on  
The wild  
Child.

I  
Must lie  
Still as stone  
By the wren bone  
Wall hearing the moan  
Of the mother hidden  
And the shadowed head of pain  
Casting tomorrow like a thorn  
And the midwives of miracle sing  
Until the turbulent new born  
Burns me his name and his flame  
And the winged wall is torn  
By his torrid crown  
And the dark thrown  
From his loin  
To bright  
Light.

When  
 The wren  
 Bone writhes down  
 And the first dawn  
 Furied by his stream  
 Swarms on the kingdom come  
 Of the dazzler of heaven  
 And the splashed mothering maiden  
 Who bore him with a bonfire in  
 His mouth and rocked him like a storm  
 I shall run lost in sudden  
 Terror and shining from  
 The once hooded room  
 Crying in vain  
 In the caldron  
 Of his  
 Kiss

In  
 The spin  
 Of the sun  
 In the spuming  
 Cyclone of his wing  
 For I was lost who am  
 Crying at the man-drenched throne  
 In the first fury of his stream  
 And the lightnings of adoration  
 Back to black silence melt and mourn  
 For I was lost who have come  
 To dumbounding haven  
 And the finding one  
 And the high noon  
 Of his wound  
 Blinds my  
 Cry.

## HORIZON

There  
 Crouched bare  
 In the shrine  
 Of his blazing  
 Breast I shall waken  
 To the judge-blown bedlam  
 Of the uncaged sea bottom  
 The cloud climb of the exhaling tomb  
 And the bidden dust upsailing  
 With his flame in every grain.  
 O spiral of ascension  
 From the vultured urn  
 Of the morning  
 Of man when  
 The land  
 And

The  
 Born sea  
 Praised the sun  
 The finding one  
 And upright Adam  
 Sang upon origin!  
 O the wings of the children!  
 The woundward flight of the ancient  
 Young from the canyons of oblivion!  
 The sky stride of the always slain  
 In battle! the happening  
 Of saints to their vision!  
 The world winding home!  
 And the whole pain  
 Flows open  
 And I  
 Die.

## II

In the name of the lost who glory in  
 The swinish plains of carrion  
     Under the burial song  
     Of the birds of burden  
     Heavy with the drowned  
     And the green dust  
     And bearing  
     The ghost  
     From  
     The ground  
     Like pollen  
     On the black plume  
     And the beak of slime  
     I pray though I belong  
     Not wholly to that lamenting  
     Brethren for joy has moved within  
 The inmost marrow of my heart bone

That he who learns now the sun and moon  
     Of his mother's milk may return  
     Before the lips blaze and bloom  
     To the birth bloody room  
     Behind the wall's wren  
     Bone and be dumb  
     And the womb  
     That bore  
     For  
     All men  
     The adored  
     Infant light or  
     The dazzling prison  
     Yawn to his upcoming.  
     In the name of the wanton  
 Lost on the unchristened mountain  
     In the centre of dark I pray him

## HORIZON

That he let the dead lie though they moan  
 For his briared hands to hoist them  
 To the shrine of his world's wound  
 And the blood drop's garden  
 Endure the stone  
 Blind host to sleep  
 In the dark  
 And deep  
 Rock  
 Awake  
 No heart bone  
 But let it break  
 On the mountain crown  
 Unsummoned by the sun  
 And the beating dust be blown  
 Down to the river rooting plain  
 Under the night forever falling.

Forever falling night is a known  
 Star and country to the legion  
 Of sleepers whose tongue I toll  
 To mourn his deluging  
 Light through sea and soil  
 And we have come  
 To know all  
 Places  
 Ways  
 Mazes  
 Passages  
 Quarters and graves  
 Of the endless fall.  
 Now common lazarus  
 Of the charting sleepers prays  
 Never to awake and arise  
 For the country of death is the heart's size

And the star of the lost the shape of the eyes.  
 In the name of the fatherless  
 In the name of the unborn  
 And the undesirers  
 Of midwiving morning's  
 Hands or instruments  
 O in the name  
 Of no one  
 Now or  
 No  
 One to  
 Be I pray  
 May the crimson  
 Sun spin a grave grey  
 And the colour of clay  
 Stream upon his martyrdom  
 In the interpreted evening  
 And the known dark of the earth amen.

I turn the corner of prayer and burn  
 In a blessing of the sudden  
 Sun. In the name of the damned  
 I would turn back and run  
 To the hidden land  
 But the loud sun  
 Christens down  
 The sky.  
 I  
 Am found.  
 O let him  
 Scald me and drown  
 Me in his world's wound.  
 His lightning answers my  
 Cry. My voice burns in his hand.  
 Now I am lost in the blinding  
 One. The sun roars at the prayer's end.

## HOLY SPRING

O

Out of a bed of love  
When that immortal hospital made one more move to soothe  
The cureless counted body,  
    And ruin and his causes  
Over the barbed and shooting sea assured an army  
    And swept into our wounds and houses,  
I climb to greet the war in which I have no heart but only  
    That one dark I owe my light,  
Call for confessor and wiser mirror but there are none  
    To glow after the god stoning night  
And I am struck as lonely as a holy maker by the sun.

No

Praise that the spring time is all  
Gabriel and radiant shrubbery as the morning grows joyful  
    Out of the woebegone pyre  
And the multitude's sultry tear turns cool on the weeping wall,  
    My arising prodigal  
Sun the father his quiver full of the infants of pure fire,  
    But blessed be hail and upheaval  
That uncalm still it is sure alone to stand and sing  
    Alone in the husk of man's home  
And the mother and toppling house of the holy spring,  
    If only for a last time.

DUNSTAN THOMPSON

## ALL FRIENDS, ALL SUICIDES, THE ENAMOURED DEAD

All friends, all suicides, the enamoured dead  
With violets from their eyes, and in their hair  
Forget-me-nots, are gilded romantics, sped  
By our wishes, and sung on the swan stair.

They dance, O my masquer, down  
Arcades of cannon, who crown  
Peace in the caroling bed with bomb's burst and the teardrop flare.

Each enemy, his furious charm, no less  
The compelling ardour of war's guilty heart,  
Together turn us to each other, and bless  
This world of kisses, losses, and fine art.

We live, and, lovers, are  
Locked in one burning star,  
For who die, their grief to guess, going alone, must fly apart.

These pass, the gallant, and the violent, brave  
In fur like folly boys, who, leaving, lend  
Their praises to warm houses, give the grave  
Last letters, and have luck for money to spend.

In the stabbing torchlight, they  
Smile once, and walk away,  
And we say goodbye, and they wave to us at the street's end.

It is youth with flowers, it is youth who springs  
Through hoarfrost, through the winter dunged by hate,  
While here, from this cold city, where gangster kings  
Nailed time in shrouds, we hang flags for a glad fête.

Our names are published, known  
To the knights who sleep alone:  
Stone fingers touch gold wedding rings, but the bones lie desolate.

Triumphant hours like diamonds shine between  
This moment and its meaning, are omens spun  
From love, whose moonlight fountains, over green  
Passionate dreamers, mist the rust-red gun.

How in these vespers, death  
Whispers from every breath—  
But gorgeous ghosts may keen; if we wake, sweet prince, the  
night is done.

## SONNET OF TROY

This tall horseman, my young man of Mars,  
Scatters the gold dust from his hair, and takes  
Me to pieces like a gun. The myth forsakes  
Him slowly. Almost mortal, he shows the scars  
Where medals of honour, cut-steel stars,  
Pin death above the heart. But bends, but breaks  
In his hand, my love, whose wrecked machinery makes  
Time, the inventor, weep through a world of wars.  
Guilt like a rust enamels me. I breed  
A poison not this murdering youth may dare  
In one drop of blood to battle. No delight  
Is possible. Only at parting do we need  
Each other: together, we are not there  
At all. Love, I farewell you out of sight.

*AUDREY BEECHAM*

## SONNET

A silence, thick and close, seeps through at night  
From their imprisoned hearts, when in a dream  
Some tunnelled course is punctured by the fleam  
Of fresh despair: and then they twitch in fright  
Or break in sudden sweat as cattle might,  
But do not wake to see the moonlight stream  
Onto the street below where fishes gleam  
And little boats float in the gutters bright.

So steeped in dream, their waking moments grin  
In antic play of monkeys on a screen:  
Nor can they rise from sleep to dive between  
The tick and tock of second split, to where  
The foaming clouds might freeze and silent there  
Through massive crack of light the sky fall in.

# BERTRAND RUSSELL

## BRITISH AND AMERICAN NATIONALISM

EVERY age has its typical folly, and that of ours is nationalism. This is of course no new phenomenon. It appeared first among the Jews in the time of the Maccabees: then it went underground until it was revived by the English in their resistance to the Armada. Shakespeare gave it such admirable expression that his readers did not notice its absurdity. The French Revolution made it rampant in France; Fichte, and the war of liberation in 1813, caused it to spread to Germany. Now it exists everywhere: in Mongolia and Monaco, in Ecuador and among the descendants of the Aztecs, no less than among the Great Powers. It is a centrifugal force, preventing the governmental and economic unification which is called for by modern technique both in industry and in war. If it cannot be prevented from controlling national governments, there is little hope of preserving civilized populations from suicide.

The two nationalisms that I have experienced most vividly have been those of America and England. From 1938 till May 1944 I lived in various parts of the United States; I returned to England on a British boat, and was still at sea on D-day. The nationalist feeling on both sides was very disquieting, for it is obvious to every sane person in both countries that their co-operation is absolutely necessary if disaster is to be averted. I am the more perturbed since I find in myself a proneness to respond to British nationalism and to condemn that of America, which I can only control by a great effort towards impartiality. Thus, my own emotions help me to know how difficult it is to eradicate this pernicious way of feeling—pernicious because it generates hatred between members of nations that ought to work together.

The highly educated minority in both countries is, on the whole, free from this unfortunate passion. In universities, on both sides of the Atlantic, one finds an attitude of mutual respect, and an ignorance of what is thought and felt by the man in the street. Government officials, and the innumerable unofficial emissaries whom the two governments send to London and Washington

respectively, belong to the same social group as the university professors, and seldom encounter the fiercer forms of national feeling. If they did, perhaps even more would be done by the authorities to promote mutual understanding.

There is a great difference in the nature of the patriotisms of the two countries. British patriotism is quasi-biological, and has an affinity with family feeling; American patriotism is more analogous to party or sectarian loyalty. An Englishman may feel that the socialists are subversive, or, alternatively, that the Tories are ruining the country; he may feel this strongly enough to hate the party to which he is opposed. But this feeling is totally unlike the feeling he has towards his country's enemies, and fades away in a time of national crisis. Our patriotism, like that of other European countries, is made up of love of home, the feeling of cosy safety produced by what is familiar, the comfort of known traditions and prejudices, and the instinct that, in spite of superficial dissensions, we are at one on all really serious issues. A hen, terrified by a motor-car, will rush across the road in imminent danger of death, in order to feel the safety of home. In like manner, during the blitz, I longed to be in England. But all Americans said, 'how glad you must be to be out of it', and were totally unable to understand my contrary feeling.

American patriotism is quite different. The United States is not biologically a nation; a minority of the inhabitants are descended from people who were in America a hundred years ago. When an American feels a glow of warmth about his country, he is not thinking, as an Englishman might, of hedgerows and the song of the cuckoo and wild roses in June, of village churches that keep alive what was best in the middle ages, or even of the traditional pomp of kings and Lord Mayors and judges in their wigs. Shakespeare speaks of the English as '*this happy breed of men*'; Lincoln speaks of the Americans as '*dedicated to a proposition*'. This contrast sums up the difference. English patriotism, like that of other Europeans, belongs to the instinctive and sub-conscious part of human nature, in which we are little different from the brutes; American patriotism belongs to the intellectual, conscious, reasoning part, which is more civilized but less compelling. To us, our country is part of our birthright; to Americans, theirs is part of a sacred Cause.

This fundamental difference, because it is not understood, is a

source of mutual irritation. Every European in America has been worried by the constant question, 'how do you like America?' To us, there is a sort of indecency about the question, as if a man should say, 'how do you like my wife?' We do not think it a mark of virtue to prefer another man's wife to one's own, nor do we think it right to prefer another man's country. I had in America a German friend (a refugee) who had lived many years in England; during that time (so he told me) he had never once been asked, 'how do you like England?' But if a country is 'dedicated to a proposition' the matter is different. If the proposition is true, we all owe allegiance to it; if false, none of us do so. Therefore the man who prefers his own country to America seems, to Americans, to be finding fault with the fundamental articles of their creed. I could not make it clear to Americans (with only two or three exceptions) why I did not wish to become naturalized. I said that an adopted nation was like adopted children, and could not give the profound emotional fulfilment that is to be derived from one's own children and one's own nation. But my words remained unintelligible, and produced no glimmer of response.

What is this 'proposition' to which America is dedicated? I shall venture to paraphrase and enlarge on Lincoln's few words on this subject, since I wish to set forth what the average American sincerely and profoundly believes. It is hardly relevant that the United States does not realize his ideals. Every clergyman will admit that the Christian churches fail to realize Christian ideals, but he is none the less quite genuinely loyal to these ideals and persuaded of their importance. So an American may admit this or that blemish, and still maintain, in all sincerity, that America is striving to go in the right direction, which in his opinion other nations, and especially the British, are not.

England, for most Americans, is still the England of George III. What has happened since may, in part, be known intellectually, but has not been assimilated emotionally. America stands for those things in which Jefferson differed from George III: equality, absence of caste, political and religious freedom, abstinence from foreign conquest—the creed, in fact, of English and American Radicals in 1776. The English are disliked because they have hereditary titles, because they have an empire, and because socially they are felt to be haughty. It is also thought that they are

effete and inefficient, but at the same time astute and always able to outwit the simple and honest Americans. On the highest moral grounds, therefore, it is the duty of Americans to oppose British cunning, arrogance, and lust of dominion.

The attitude of suspicion of England is sometimes carried to extraordinary lengths. I was assured at a dinner table, by a middle-aged lady who was apparently considered sane, that the aeroplanes which attacked at Pearl Harbour were British, the airmen having dyed their skins and painted their eyebrows to slope upwards; this she had from one in the know at Washington, whose name she was not at liberty to divulge. An American pilot, who had been disabled in North Africa, flatly gave me the lie when I mentioned that, at the time of the War of Independence, many Englishmen were on the side of America. From reading the *Chicago Tribune* it is hardly possible to discover that the nominal enemy is Germany, not England. I have often heard Americans, with gleaming eyes, express the wish that they could fight England, instead of the relatively harmless Nazis. When I have made speeches on India, as I have frequently done, everything I said has been discounted as British propaganda, except once, when a Hindu and a Muslim were both on the platform, and displayed their dissension without any need of emphasis on my part.

The nationalism of Americans, owing to the fact that it is not so deeply based on instinct as that of the British, is more vocal, more shrill, and more blatant. There is supposed to be something called 'The American Way of Life', which is so excellent that it ought to be imposed throughout the world. The family, one gathers, was invented by the Pilgrim Fathers; from Adam and Eve to their day it was unknown, and is still unknown on this side of the Atlantic. It is quite useless to point to comparative statistics of divorce or to any other evidence; the belief remains unshakable. Leading articles in newspapers assure readers that the American young man, in contrast to the European, is sexually virtuous and hates violence. Here again, an appeal to the statistics of rape and homicide is useless. The wife of a Chicago professor assured me that there only seemed to be more murders in Chicago than in London because the English police were so inefficient. And if labour troubles are worse in America than in England, that is because English employees have no spirit and English employers are cowards.

I do not think Americans can be conciliated by kowtowing to them. If we were to attempt this, we should have to do various things, some good, some bad. First and foremost, we should have to abolish titles. Next, we should have to surrender all the parts of the Empire that are not self-governing. Third, we should have to revert to unregulated capitalism, abandon all attempts at planning, and allow the unemployed to starve. Fourth, we should have to adopt the American attitude to negroes. Last, but not least, we should have to learn to talk American, for nine Americans out of ten believe that our way of speaking is an affectation, only adopted to show our superiority. We found, in America, that strangers in shops or buses at first took us for Germans and tolerated our way of speaking, but when they found that English was our native language they became indignant with us for not speaking as they do. It never occurred to them for a moment that the English have some rights in the English language.

In June 1944 I published in the *Saturday Evening Post* an article called 'Can Americans and British be Friends?' It was intended as my modest contribution towards Anglo-American co-operation, and was the very reverse of provocative. The gist of it was that, while of course America is God's own country, still the English have perhaps *some* humble merits, which could be acknowledged without endangering the purity of American morals and patriotism. The result was a shower of violently abusive letters; hardly a single American letter was friendly though there were friendly ones from Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen, and even Hindus. Here is a typical sample of the American response:

'Sir.—In your "Can Americans and Britons be Friends?" you ignore the most obvious fact that the mutual dislike between Americans and "Britons" exists solely for the English, and not for the Welsh, Scotch and Irish who are well liked by the Americans, and vice versa—you also disregard the fact that the Welsh, Irish, and Scotch residents of the United States make sincere efforts to Americanize themselves and become naturalized citizens as soon as possible. You further overlook the fact the Irish and Welsh dislike the English as heartily as we Americans loathe you; and for the identical reasons! If the English do not consider themselves "the master race" why do they insult the American people by refusing to

become naturalized citizens (save only to procure jobs in war plants at exorbitant rates of pay)? And why has Russell prevented his young son from learning to speak the American language although the lad has spent five of his six years in the haven of the U.S.? The answer is either obtuseness, or snobbery—it certainly is not sense. This old-stock American of remote British ancestry considers the English to be America's No. 1 enemies as twice within twenty-five years they have made suckers out of us by involving us in costly wars in which we have no vital stake; and are now assiduously sowing the seeds for involving us in a third war (with Russia). According to his scale of values the modern-day Englishman is the *next* to lowest form of animal life—the American who toadies to the English being the lowest. No American of personal dignity wants or feels the need of the "friendship" of the English—you are far too expensive "friends"—forty billion dollars 1917–18; 250–300 billion in 1941–45—it would be far cheaper for us to join the Germans (or the Russians) and exterminate your breed.'

This is not an anonymous effusion; the writer gives his full name and address. The name is not Irish, but one familiar and native in England.

Such a letter as this will be dismissed by most educated Americans, and by most English people who have associated with educated Americans, as the mere effusion of a crank, but this is a dangerous error. I have encountered the point of view which it expresses in print, in letters, and in social intercourse too frequently to be any longer able to suppose it rare or politically unimportant. It is the point of view which dominated American policy from the rejection of the Versailles Treaty to the passing of the Neutrality Act. Since 1939, the men who have been in charge of the American Government have succeeded, by the exercise of amazing tact and skill, in preventing the United States from signing its own death-warrant by permitting the defeat of the British; but few people on this side of the Atlantic know how difficult it has been to achieve this success—or how powerful are the anti-British forces which may assert themselves when the war is over. British sailors in American ports experience a popular hostility so great as to involve frequent danger to life; this hostility is, of course, partly Irish, but by no means wholly. There is a vast

hatred of us on the part of a very large section of Americans. This fact is in the highest degree disquieting—so disquieting that many people refuse to acknowledge it. But I do not think any useful purpose is served by blinking facts, for until the facts are admitted nothing effective can be done to diminish the evil.

That there are any valid grounds for hating us is not easy to admit in the face of hostility, nevertheless I fear it is true. We have in the past been arrogant and contemptuous towards Americans; no novelist would have written about a European country as Dickens wrote about the United States in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Something of this attitude still exists. So far as I have been able to judge, medicine is better in America than in England, but I have frequently found English medical men unwilling to consider seriously innovations coming from the other side of the Atlantic. I should not be surprised to find that the same attitude exists towards technical improvements in industrial processes. Nor are stay-at-home English people aware of the misdeeds of our representatives abroad. At the present moment, our actions in Belgium, Italy and Greece are such as to fill every sensible man with deep misgivings. When I lived in China I found that, so long as the British had any influence there, they exerted it almost always in favour of what was decadent and corrupt, and against every movement that gave hope of radical improvement. We have now little power to do harm in China, but we still do harm where we can. Until we undertake a drastic reform of the Foreign Office, friends of mankind abroad will continue to think ill of us, and not without cause.

If we are to be less hated in America, we must admit and amend our shortcomings, without being silent about our virtues. But when we have done everything that is in our power, much will remain to be done by Americans, especially by those who control education in schools.

When one finds oneself or one's country hated, one reacts at first in an instinctive manner which is usually unwise. When the amiable correspondent whom I have quoted, in order to show the freedom of Americans from that arrogance which exclusively characterizes the British, expresses the hope that his country will join with Germany or Russia to exterminate us, my first instinctive reaction is to feel in return an equal animosity, and to explore the possibility of a United States of Europe which shall be strong

enough to meet hate with hate and force with force. But while a United States of Europe would be infinitely desirable if it were possible, it would not advance the welfare of mankind if the motive of its formation were hostility to the United States of America. Hatred between nations is an evil thing; hatred between allies is very dangerous; and hatred between Great Britain and America is suicidal on the part of both. We must therefore avoid feeling hatred ourselves, and try to find ways of diminishing the hatred of which we are the object.

I do not think we can achieve anything by being mousy and humble, or by singing small about what we have done in the war. Americans, almost to a man, consider our loss of Singapore shameful, but their loss of Manila glorious. We do no good by giving in to this belief. They observe that in the battle of Normandy we remained stuck, while they careered over France; here, again, we should insist on explaining the strategical situation. We should shout from the house-tops that our war effort, per head, has been greater than theirs. Only harm is done by being 'tactful' in these respects.

American boastfulness is like that of small boys, and they expect it to be met by boastfulness in return. When we abstain from boasting, it is not from modesty, but from pride; they sense this, and as our pride is what they most dislike, our failure to brag increases their dislike of us. It also causes them to be genuinely ignorant of the facts. Our newspaper publicity in America would be more useful if it were more self-assertive—not as to our virtues, but as to our efficiency. Not that we should ever hint at any shortcomings on their part, but that we should be more blatant about our own exploits.

The source of the trouble lies largely in American schools, which are in some regions exploited as agents for the propagation of nationalism. Education is a matter for each State, not a Federal matter; it is everywhere deeply involved in politics. Public sentiment is such that few politicians would dare to find fault with anti-English teaching in schools; the Federal Government might, as a war measure, express opinions as to what is prudent, but has no power to enforce its views.

The educational effect of 'democracy', as understood in America, is curious. Every taxpayer feels that he has a right to object if, in any State-supported institution, anything is taught of which he

personally disapproves. If, in a State university, a biology teacher ventures to express a belief in evolution, or a teacher of ancient history throws doubt on the complete historicity of the Pentateuch, or a teacher of astronomy mentions that the Inquisition opposed Galileo, the President of the university in question is inundated with indignant letters from uneducated farmers or fanatical Irishmen, saying that their hard-earned money ought not to be spent on the dissemination of such pestiferous falsehoods. If the President of the university is obdurate, the Governor and Legislature of the State are approached, by a powerful lobby if the matter is deemed of sufficient importance. Naturally the practical politicians see no reason why professors should insist on teaching anything unpopular. 'Democracy' is interpreted as meaning that the majority knows best about everything. Are birds descended from fishes? Are there reasons for doubting whether Joshua made the sun stand still? Has the Church ever been hostile to scientific doctrines subsequently accepted? Is Aristotle's doctrine of the syllogism capable of improvement? The prevalent feeling in America, except among the highly educated minority, is that such questions should be decided, not by the opinions of those who have studied them, but by the prejudices of the ignorant majority. This makes the life of a teacher in a State institution somewhat hectic: at every moment he or she has to fear that a pupil will repeat something to his parents, they will repeat it to the priest or the pastor, and there will be the devil to pay.

The pressure of the ignorant multitude is, however, only half of what the teacher has to face. There is also the pressure of the plutocracy, exercised more discreetly, but not less drastically. The condition of immigrant labour in the State of California has long been appalling; it was set forth in a best seller, *The Grapes of Wrath*. A young instructor in the University of California ventured to investigate the question, and to publish his results, among which was the conclusion that trade union organization was necessary if conditions were to be improved. He was in consequence dismissed from his post, on the alleged grounds that he was a bad teacher and did insufficient research. (Investigating the conditions of labour in California is not 'research'.) Although the other teachers sympathized with him, they could do nothing, for fear of sharing his fate. If their children were not to starve, they had to acquiesce in *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*.

C

The position of a teacher in an American university is utterly different from his position at Oxford or Cambridge. The independence enjoyed by the Fellows of a College at Oxford or Cambridge is a legacy of the middle ages; it is derived from the autonomy of the medieval Church, and owes much to the courage of St. Ambrose and the philosophy of St. Augustine. Even in England, it is only tolerated as a survival; the modern provincial universities have not been allowed to possess the merit which makes Oxford and Cambridge unique. This merit is that the men who teach also control the finance. The Master and Fellows of a College have no one above them except the State; and as they belong to the same social caste as the men who (in effect) compose the State, they have seldom had difficulty in coming to terms with Parliament and the government. The Master is either elected by the Fellows, or is just such a man as they would have elected; moreover, he is a constitutional monarch, possessing only very limited powers. The consequence is that learned men have, in England, an independence and a status which, elsewhere, they have been gradually losing ever since the Reformation. We all know of their subjection in Germany and Russia, but in America there is something similar, though less in degree and less avowed.

An American university is a very different affair from Oxford or Cambridge. Its finances are in the hands of a Board of Trustees, who are business men, usually wholly devoid of academic qualifications. These business men appoint a President, who may or may not have had some academic education, but is selected for his supposed administrative ability, which, of course, includes agreement with the political and theological prejudices of the Trustees. The President, so long as he retains the support of the Trustees, has the powers of an oriental despot rather than those of a constitutional monarch. All the younger members of the faculty (roughly speaking, those under about thirty-eight or forty years of age) hold their posts on a yearly contract; if the President, for no matter what reason, dislikes one of them, his contract is not renewed. And if the cause (avowed or unavowed) of his dismissal is one with which other Presidents of universities sympathize, he will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain another post. Consequently cases in which younger teachers refuse to toe the line are rare. The older men, who have the title of

Professor, have more security of tenure, but even they would find their position very difficult if they were on bad terms with their President. As a rule, by the time a man becomes a professor he has been tamed, and has learnt the advantages of submission.

The result of this system is that, while Presidents of universities are part of the governing class, mere men of learning are nobodies, having something of the position of Greek slaves in the Roman Empire. I found that when the President of a university invited me to dinner, if he wished to do me honour the other guests would be business men; only social inferiors were invited to meet mere professors. The difference of status is at once apparent to any one who has to visit both professors and the President in their respective offices. The President's office is in a palatial building, with carpets even in the passages; his rooms are vast and expensively furnished, with all the evidences of insolent luxury, while the professors' little dens are stowed away in stuffy corners. This expresses the relative estimation in which Americans hold administration and learning.

In regard to some subjects, the harm done by this system is not apparent. It does not affect the teaching of mathematics or physics, and it does no harm to the teaching of medicine or chemistry or crystallography or entomology. But whenever a subject is related, even indirectly, to economics or politics or theology, the harm done is immeasurable. Among young students in America, as I have known them, there is a great deal of first-class ability, combined with a degree of enthusiasm and enterprise which is much less common in England. I cannot speak too highly of the best of the young men whom I have taught in America. But owing to the system, very few of them achieved as much as their abilities would have led one to hope. T. S. Eliot, whose acquaintance I made when he was my pupil at Harvard, turned his back upon America; his somewhat reactionary opinions are, no doubt, all due to revolt against the ideals of his native country. Of the rest of my American pupils, some were Jews, and had to combat the anti-semitic prejudice which makes it very difficult for Jews to obtain university posts; others were Radicals, who either surrendered and lapsed into listless cynicism, or stuck to their convictions and therefore abandoned the teaching profession. Those who somehow managed to fit in were so over-worked, as a result of the exploiting instincts of the ignorant

business men whose employees they were, that they lost their resilience and the fine edge of their abilities was blunted. And so, in one way or another, America's immense heritage of idealistic ability is squandered by a system which divides all power between the prejudices of the ignorant many and the ruthlessness of the plutocratic few.

The situation in schools is much worse than in universities. In New York and Boston the Catholic Church is dominant; New York school teachers are taught to speak of the Reformation as 'the Protestant Revolt'. In the Middle West there is intense local patriotism, and teachers can hardly hope for an appointment except in their own city or its vicinity. They must of course carefully abstain from shocking the prejudices or pruderies of even the most benighted parents, and from saying anything that might conceivably offend the plutocracy. All this is faithfully recorded in *Middletown*, a book which should be studied by all who wish to understand America. The actual instruction, from a technical point of view, is very poor; English young people who were sent to America in 1940 and who are now of an age to go to the university, find that they have to go to school again in England in order to reach the necessary scholastic level. My daughter, then aged fifteen, came to America to visit me in 1939, and had to stay there because of the outbreak of the war; young as she was, I had to send her to the university, because no school taught anything (except lying plutocratic propaganda) that she had not already adequately learnt.

All this is difficult to reform without a radical reform in politics, of a sort which seems very improbable, since it would have to go against the American conception of 'democracy'. According to this conception, not only are one man's political rights as great as those of another, but his judgement is equally to be respected on all points. On bimetallism or egyptology or astronomy, the opinion of an up-country farmer is allowed the same weight as that of a man who has spent his life in studying the question at issue; indeed, if popular passion is roused, the farmer's opinion has the greater weight, because he can find more people to agree with him. Nor is it only in opinion that conformity is demanded; in dress and manners and speech any departure from what is usual is frowned upon. A learned man must not be absent-minded, or display any of those amiable eccentricities

described in Lamb's essay on Oxford in the vacation; he must learn to look and move like a business man, if he is not to be thought to be setting himself up. This protective colouration gradually goes deeper, and in time, even in his dreams, he comes to prefer executive efficiency to thought and meditation. In Europe a man's profession can often be guessed from his demeanour, but not so in America, where the whole middle class apes the successful executive. All must be alike; none must be outstanding unless in income.

The intolerable boredom of such a vast uniformity is alleviated by certain tolerated forms of hero-worship; those who excel in athletics or the movies are allowed to be great, and have some of the privileges of aristocracy. But even for them there are strict limits; no movie star, however great, could avow himself or herself an agnostic and still appear on the screen. And as every one knows, an apparently virtuous life is essential, though a new wife or husband every few months is permissible.

There are in America very many individuals who are intelligent, high-minded, and in every way delightful; I have a large number of friends in that country whose friendship I value very highly. But unfortunately the system is such that almost all the most admirable people are devoid of power, and many of them know very little about how affairs are managed. In the public life of America, the best thing is the Federal Government, which is also what is most conspicuous; the worst things are those that happen under cover and do not become known. The power of the very rich, even under a Government that they abhor, is much greater than the average citizen supposes: they can give or withhold credit and custom and subscriptions, as advertisers they have a hold on the Press, and as trustees they control the majority of universities. A man who is in their bad books can succeed as an author, but in hardly any other career; that is why American literature is so largely radical.

It is to be hoped that the new world-wide responsibilities of the United States will lead to more respect for knowledge, and a greater readiness to accept guidance, in practical affairs, from those who have studied the matter in hand. In particular, to return to our earlier theme, we may not irrationally expect that supremacy will make American patriotism less uneasily self-assertive, and that the broad identity of interests between Great Britain and the

United States will gradually soften the hatred of us which undoubtedly exists. It is of course the duty of every Englishman to do what he can towards this end, but a great part of the work will have to be done by Americans. The American Government is clearly aware of the necessity, and perhaps may find means to promote that friendly feeling without which the outlook for the world must be utterly black.

The problem is part of the larger problem of nationalism throughout the world. Since it has become impossible for even the most powerful nations to hold their own without the help of allies in war, the cruder forms of national self-assertion have everywhere become incompatible with self-preservation. This fact is not at all realized by the general public in America; I have frequently heard it said that, with the largest army, navy, and air force in the world, the United States could easily defeat a coalition of all other Powers. This state of mind is dangerous, and might lead in time to an attempt at world conquest. We in England have learnt (except for a few old men, some of them in high places) that it will not do to offend everybody; but many of us still have towards citizens of other countries the haughty attitude acquired during our period of unquestioned naval supremacy. It is a wholesome exercise to admit your own faults and other people's merits. In private life everyone knows this, but as between nations those who claim a monopoly of patriotism are often blind to it. Human beings of different nations do not differ so much as they think they do; they have the same pains and pleasures, similar loves and hates, and an equal admixture of good and bad. Mutual hatred can only injure both; mutual esteem is enjoined not only by the moral law, but by common prudence.

IAN W. ALEXANDER

# NOVELIST-PHILOSOPHERS

## II—THE SCEPTICISM OF ANATOLE FRANCE

THE year nineteen forty-four marks the centenary of the birth of Anatole France; it also marks the passage of twenty long years since his death. In that period of twenty years the reputation of France has undergone something of an eclipse, the reasons for which are in the nature of things. On the one hand, his value as a writer and thinker was, in the latter years of his life, grossly exaggerated, not so much in France as in this and other European countries. He became the 'Master', the object of a cult, the blind, uncritical nature of which was the cause of more harm than good. On the other hand, his political activity from the 'Affaire Dreyfus' onwards, his Socialism, anti-militarism and anti-clericalism made him the centre of political controversy in France, hated by the Right and venerated by the Left. Finally, his assumption of the mantle of Renan, his dilettantism and scepticism came into conflict with the idealistic and religious revival of the early years of the new century, and from the day when Victor Giraud, in his *Les Maîtres de l'heure*, described him as 'le plus séduisant et le plus dangereux professeur d'anarchie que nous ayons eu depuis Renan', his philosophy and type of mentality have been in contradiction with the main currents of contemporary French thought and literature.

Now, twenty years after his death, Anatole France is no longer the object of such passionate controversy and his work can be judged more objectively. Perhaps his very irrelevance to modern times (for his influence is non-existent) is an additional help. In attempting a revaluation, we are no longer confronted with a 'Master' or a political and moral 'Anarchist', but with the representative of a certain highly interesting and even complex type of mind in pre-war French literature.

### I

Anatole France was born and passed his youth on the Quai Malaquais, where his father traded as a bookseller. A lover of

Paris and a lover of books, these are the two characteristics which typify him from the start. 'Parisien de toute son âme et de toute sa chair', his love and knowledge of Paris provide one of the essential charms of his best-known works. A book-worm too, steeped in erudition, he is and will remain; his work, novels included, is essentially *livresque*; reality he sees only or predominantly through books.

France seems to have undergone a period of youthful scientific enthusiasm; the influence of Taine, of Renan's *Avenir de la Science*, and particularly of Darwin and the theory of Evolution leads him to a philosophy of determinism and fatalism, illustrated in *Jocaste* and the first version of *Les désirs de Jean Servien*. It is no less apparent in the *Poèmes dorés* (1873), where Darwin, Lucretius, Schopenhauer and Leconte de Lisle furnish the central theme of the eternal passage and decay of things. Nevertheless, in the *Poèmes dorés* and the *Noces corinthiennes*, his tragedy in verse, the scientific view is superseded. Darwin combines with the wider influence of Renan's *dilettantisme* to produce a form of scepticism which recognizes the beauty of religion and myth and which, without any foundation of belief, finds in them a source of æsthetic pleasure. 'C'est une pensée peu scientifique', he writes, 'que de croire que la science puisse un jour remplacer la religion'. Science itself, he declares in the *Poèmes dorés*, cannot be true until clothed with 'cette vérité littéraire qui s'appelle poésie.'

Already an atheist and sceptic, France remains haunted by religious belief, a belief which he cannot share, but to which, like Renan, he accords value and in which he finds both a poetic theme and æsthetic pleasure. 'J'ai refait le rêve des âges de foi: je me suis donné l'illusion des vives croyances . . . Et qu'importe que le rêve mente, s'il est beau', he writes in the preface to the *Noces corinthiennes*. Indeed, his treatment of the theme of Christianity in conflict with paganism might well justify us in saying of him what he said of Sully-Prudhomme: 'Son athéisme est si pieux qu'il a semblé chrétien à certaines personnes croyantes'. This vestige of religious longing, illustrated in so many ways in his works, his preoccupation with saints, martyrs and priests and with the psychology of religious belief provides, as will become apparent later, an essential key to France's thought.

Now both the works mentioned are Parnassian in character,

as illustrated by their 'impersonal' form and their setting in ancient Greece. The influence of the Parnassians on France, who was a member of the group, is considerable, and this dilettante pre-occupation with religion may, in part, have a similar source. The latter derives largely from Renan; but we may also discern the influence of Louis Ménard, the friend of Leconte de Lisle and author of the *Rêveries d'un païen mystique* (this influence was suggested, in passing, by Michaut in his work on Anatole France). Following the German philosopher of religion, Kreutzer, Ménard affirmed a fundamental religious instinct in man which expresses itself spontaneously in myth and religious belief, these representing his interpretation of the universe and his relation to it. Ménard accepted each and every one of these mythologies, with a preference for the Polytheism of the Greeks. The viewpoint of France is much the same: a like recognition of the spontaneity of religious belief, independently of the forms in which it is successively embodied, and a like preference for the religions and systems preceding Socrates and Christianity or succeeding them. For France's Hellenism, which he imbibed from the Parnassians (the influence of Victor Brochard is likewise all-important), is restricted to a love of pre-Socratic Greece on the one hand and Alexandria on the other. With Socrates, the introduction of a moralism, which is succeeded by the asceticism of the Stoics and later of Christianity, has replaced the smiling mythologies of antiquity, in no sense the enemy of pleasure and beauty, by the rude accents of a tyrannical dogma. One of the central themes of the *Poèmes dorés* and the *Noës corinthiennes* is precisely this conflict between the smiling Goddesses and the sombre God of Christianity.

In essentials, however, the mind of France and that of a Ménard are at war. For Ménard remains a 'mystic'; it is France's tragedy that, while haunted by the vision of a spontaneous belief, he is by temperament deprived of the 'âme candide' of the believer; he remains an intellectual sceptic in whom the source of spontaneous feeling has been dried up.

The sceptic, playing with ideas, ranging with an indulgent irony over the human scene, the Anatole France we know, is now formed. In 1881 *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* and its acclaim by Lemaître assured the popularity of the author. Its charm derives from its poetic evocation of Paris, its indulgent

irony, its humour (its style is directly modelled on Swift, Fielding and Dickens). But its main characteristic is its *livresque* nature: it is a fantasy, inspired by the reading of the author: the dialogue, the *décor* has all this *livresque* quality.

To the same vein belong the evocations of childhood: *Le livre de mon ami* and, of later date, *Pierre Nozière*, *Le petit Pierre*, *La vie en fleur*. In them we find the same poetry and fantasy; but they show France's incapacity to penetrate directly into the child mind; the child is seen through the man; the immediate sensation of the child is not rendered. (In this Alphonse Daudet, as Fernand Vandérem has observed, is more successful in his *Jack*.) But if the ability of the creative writer to render the immediate sensation is lacking, there is the ability to reconstruct the functioning of the child mind in the forming of his beliefs; witness the passage in *Pierre Nozière* where we see the boy constructing a whole metaphysical and religious mythology. This brings us back to the theme already mentioned: the nature of belief, which is a constant preoccupation with France. He seeks to show how the mind has within it a natural impulse to construct a mythology for itself. M. Bergeret's dog Riquet has the same impulse. And the passage where Riquet is shown creating a mythology for himself is not only intended to ridicule religious belief by an implicit assimilation, but it indicates France's haunting, by the vision of spontaneity, of the *âme candide* of the child, the dog, as of the believer.

From 1882 to 1892 appeared the four volumes of the *Vie littéraire*, France's collected articles as critic of the *Temps*. They represent the criticism of a philosophical 'subjectivist', who denies all standards of judgement other than his own impressions. His criticism is a criticism of *fantaisie*, which brought him into conflict with the upholder of the revived critical dogmatism, Brunetière. Whatever point of view we may adopt in this controversy between a dogmatic and an impressionistic criticism (and the modern viewpoint can succeed in reconciling them), the defect of France's criticism is not so much in its pretended method; Lemaître was the chief exponent of it and was highly successful. But whereas Lemaître was capable of experiencing the immediate sensation, France was not; he sees the book he studies only through other books. His criticism is a pretext for a display of erudition and scholarly digression. A sentence from the

Preface to his *Vie littéraire* is a complete comment on his criticism: 'Oui, les livres nous tuent. Croyez-moi qui les adorai, moi qui me donnai longtemps à eux sans réserves, les livres nous tuent.' The passages where he is best are precisely those where he can give rein to his scholarly imagination in reconstructing a personage, such as the article on Mme. de la Sablière, where he is not much inferior to Sainte-Beuve.

*Thaïs* (1890) has Alexandria for its background and the conflict between Christianity and Paganism for its theme. The story of the monk Paphnuce, who converts the pagan Thaïs, but only to lose his own faith and become the prey of the passions of the flesh, is a criticism of Christian asceticism and fanaticism which destroy life and beauty. France is incarnate in Nicias, the Epicurean and sceptic who diverts himself with the systems of the philosophers as so many 'contes imaginés pour amuser l'éternelle enfance des hommes'. Yet France has succeeded once again in portraying the mentality of the believer with peculiar insight: the visions of the saint Paphnuce, the ecstasy of Thaïs on her death-bed, the terrible combat of Paphnuce, once faith is lost, a prey to the demon. Above all France is intrigued by, and depicts skilfully in the character of Thaïs, the mind of the believer, the spontaneity of faith; Thaïs, so different from Nicias, *croyait à tout*. From the literary point of view *Thaïs* is no less *livresque* than other of France's works; the background itself is *fabriqué*; while the picture of the various philosophical sects is a product of erudition. It belongs as a work to the Parnassian inspiration by its exotic Hellenistic background; it is noteworthy, in this connection, that Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *Tentation de St. Antoine* came into their own between 1890 and 1896.

*La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédaouque* will probably remain the most popular work of the author. In l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard, France has created a type—a mixture of Epicurean and Franciscan, sensual and yet naïve in faith. The work is a pretext for indulgent irony and sceptical play with ideas. The eighteenth-century background, although scrupulously exact in detail, is none the less *fabriqué*, an eighteenth century of fantasy, while the *livresque* character of the novel—the erudite digressions, the learned language of the characters, the pastiches and archaisms—is once again noteworthy.

*Le Lys rouge* is a very unsuccessful attempt at the novel of

passion and jealousy. Nowhere is France's incapacity to render *direct* experience more apparent; the psychology is rudimentary. Its interest is in its secondary characters, notably Choulette, a picture of Verlaine and one of the most interesting 'Franciscan' types in France: a strange mixture of sensuality and naïve religious faith, a veritable child of nature. His ideas are Tolstoian in character; he associates faith with suffering and sin; for him the prostitute and the poor are nearer to God than the puritan and the rich, for in them alone is preserved the *âme naïve* of the believer. The novel as a whole is a sample of the *décadent* genre: Dechartre is the æsthete who finds aesthetic pleasure in scenes of death and carnage: a sort of minor Des Esseintes.

France's sceptical and Epicurean philosophy is now fully formed and finds its expression in the volume of thoughts, *Le Jardin d'Epicure*. It is a breviary of scepticism. Man is presented as eternally a creature of folly. France scoffs at the pretensions of religion to justify itself rationally, for 'if we looked too close into first principles, we should never believe at all'. He scoffs, in true eighteenth-century fashion, at philosophical systems: metaphysics especially is a series of abstractions taken for realities, 'an anaemic mythology without body or blood'. History is an art of imagination. In science, too, he finds no hope, for he cannot share Renan's faith in science as a basis for morality. In fact, man is swayed not by his reason but by his passions. What attitude remains then for the true philosopher? An utter scepticism, which uses reason not to know, but to gain pleasure from the play of ideas, from what Rémy de Gourmont terms the constant *dissociation des idées*. Far from seeking to fulfil the Socratic maxim 'know thyself', let us use reason for our pleasure. 'It is an iniquitous abuse of intelligence, nothing less, to employ it in searching after truth . . . the way it serves us best and gives us most gratification is by seizing here and there some salient angle, some bright spot of things existent, and making play with it, yet never spoiling the innocent frolic by a spirit of system and moral sententiousness.' Let us survey the human scene with indulgent irony. Let us 'choose Irony and Pity for its assessors and judges . . . The Irony I invoke is no cruel deity. She mocks neither love nor beauty. She is gentle and kindly disposed . . .'

It is a similar sceptical philosophy which we find exposed in the *Opinions de Jérôme Coignard*, but now applied to social institutions.

Less indulgent, this criticism announces a new stage in France's career: his entry into the political arena.

France's championship of Dreyfus, his subsequent appearance as a propagandist of anti-clericalism, international Socialism and anti-militarism are well known. The consequence on the literary side is the turn he takes to social satire. The volumes of the *Histoire Contemporaine* take as their background the political controversies of the day and at the centre the 'Affaire Dreyfus'. One result of this contact with life is the appearance of a strain of realism, at least in the first two volumes. The *Histoire Contemporaine* is the first real novel of the author, all others are fictions or tales. In his portraits of M. and Mme. Bergeret and their household (based on his life with his first wife and their domestic troubles) we have a new accent: real figures abound, such as the ecclesiastics Lantaigne and Guitrel, and the political figures, the minister Loriot, the Worms-Clavelin household, etc. France is, however, less successful with the aristocratic circles: the Duc de Brécé, for example, has all the appearance of an artificial construction. A change too is apparent in the quality of the irony, which becomes more incisive and less pure *bardinage*, and in the style which no longer exhibits the same archaisms and mannerisms. The element of *livresque* largely disappears and there are abundant scenes of comedy. Unfortunately, as the work proceeds, once M. Bergeret is established in Paris and the 'Affaire Dreyfus' occupies the centre of the stage, it becomes purely political and anti-clerical propaganda; to us the last volume is now without interest. In general, France does not penetrate into the society he describes; the currents of ideas and even passions are noted, but he fails to show, as Balzac does, the intimate action of conflicting passions on the social structure. The *Comédie Humaine* is, in fact, a *cosmic* drama: the social drama is symbolical of a deeper play of cosmic forces. In Proust the drama of society manifests the action of time on humanity; it is a *metaphysical* novel. A novel which pictures society seems to require, for its unity and significance, something more than mere topicality. Even Zola's novels gain their value from the scientific and deterministic vision of things they illustrate. The failure to transcend topicality is what perhaps detracts most from the *Histoire Contemporaine*.

The above-mentioned propagandist tendency spoils *L'Ile des*

*Pingouins* which, with its facile raillery, seems aimed at social institutions as such. The story follows the social development of the Penguins, through a history which is that of France, until in despair an official blows it all to pieces and all starts over again; a process which, it is to be inferred, will recur throughout eternity.

Perhaps the best known of the works of this period are the philosophic tales, principally *Crainquebille* and the *Procurator of Judea*. They are similar, though inferior to Voltaire's. Similar in their object, namely to carry a point; inferior, in that Voltaire's *contes* are rich in philosophic content, destructive and constructive. But within these limits they are little masterpieces of the genre.

Apart from his political activity, France in his last years produced two novels. *Les Dieux ont soif* is of considerable importance. It presents in the character of Evariste Gamelin—disciple of Robespierre—a condemnation of revolutionary virtue and its disastrous consequences: 'Il est vertueux: il sera terrible.' France sees in all asceticism, revolutionary, Stoic or Christian, the enemy of tolerance; that is why to Gamelin is opposed Brotteaux des Ilettes, the sceptic, France himself.

Finally, in *La Révolte des Anges* France has given us what he rightly claims as his masterpiece, presenting as it does the synthesis of his philosophy. It tells the story of certain angels, assembled in Paris, who have revolted against God and His tyranny and prepare a new revolt against Him in the hope of establishing a reign of reason and tolerance in heaven and on earth. In it France has drawn a masterly picture of Satan; his description of him and the fall is drawn chiefly from *Paradise Lost*; there are other reminiscences of Homer and Dante. The theme itself, the struggle between God, conceived as a mere demiurge, and Satan, equally powerful, is drawn from Manichean and Gnostic sources.

As a novelist France is not creative: his principal characters are himself. He lacks the creative imagination of the great writer: his novels are primarily the vehicle of his ideas, and his favourite form is fiction or tale. In this respect he belongs to his generation; after the creative writing of Balzac and Flaubert the novel tends to be predominantly intellectual. The novel of Bourget is no less intellectual, although France has none of the latter's keen psychological insight.

## II

To grasp the quality of France's mind and work we must try to define that type of 'sensuality' or 'sensualism' which is attributed to him. He remains by profession an eighteenth-century empiricist of the school of Rousseau no less than of Condillac, seeing in immediate experience, sensation and feeling the source of our knowledge. His chapter on the Language of Metaphysics in the *Jardin d'Epicure*, which sketches the process of abstraction by which sensations are transformed into concepts, marks the disciple of Taine and Condillac. On the other hand, he recognizes, in conformity with Rousseau, the active powers of feelings, as in the passage where he declares that 'the ideals of sentiment and the visions of faith are invincible forces, and that it is by no means reason that governs mankind.'

France is constantly attracted by minds in whom this immediacy of sensation and this spontaneity of feeling are preserved. They are those 'âmes candides et naïves' to whom belief comes natural, who provide the saints and enthusiasts of this world. It would seem that the impulse to create myths is natural to the creature. France has studied this process often, in the young Pierre Nozière, in the first part of the *Ile des Pingouins* where we see the formation of social and religious beliefs, in M. Bergeret's dog Riquet. His novels abound in portraits of the believer and analyses of his mentality—the Franciscan, Tolstoian type so dear to him. Choulette, for example, in the *Lys rouge*, in whom sensuality is combined with naïve, unreflecting faith. Choulette affirms that 'all moral beauty is the result of that incomprehensible wisdom which comes from God and resembles madness.' And this spontaneity of feeling is accompanied naturally by immediacy of sensation, and consequently sensuality. He associates sin, misery and suffering with belief. Choulette is, as Paul Vence calls him, a 'fallen saint' or, as one critic describes Coignard, a 'Pascal tombé dans la crapule'. A similar character is the Franciscan Fra Giovanni in *L'humaine tragédie*: a creature of 'céleste simplicité', naïve as a child, who exclaims: 'A voir où conduit la sagesse humaine, je veux bien être fou: et je remercie Dieu de m'avoir donné la harpe et non point l'épée', and who recognizes likewise that the sins of the flesh, misery and poverty provide an easier approach to God than riches and puritanism. Even l'abbé Coignard, disciple of Epicurus and St. Francis, is

a creature endowed with such a capacity for immediate experience.

But the paradox of France is precisely that he cannot experience the immediacy of sensation or feeling. What he experiences is an 'intellectualized' sensation. In France's experience the immediate is deprived of all its real, existential content. The pleasure afforded him is a 'volupté raffinée' which derives precisely from the sensation's being deprived of its immediacy, from its being decanted, subtilized by the intellect: transformed, that is, into an *idée*. France's pleasures are all of the intellect—'des orgies de méditation'. Witness the following significant sentence in the *Livre de mon ami*: 'Je n'ai jamais eu besoin, même en bas âge, de posséder les choses pour en jouir'. Coignard, partly, Bergeret in particular, are examples of this mentality; Nicias (in *Thaïs*), etc. This intellectualism explains the peculiar quality of France's descriptions: the countryside, Paris, are never seen directly; his 'paysage' in *Thaïs* is, as has been said, 'du faux plein air'; he cannot seize the reality immediately as a Huysmans or a Ruskin. Even his 'scènes de volupté' have this curious and somewhat unpleasant quality; that is why to compare his scenes with the vigorous realism of Diderot or Rabelais is altogether inexact (it is on this very point that France was bitterly opposed to Naturalism). If it is not his intelligence it is his books which intervene between reality and himself.

France is in this respect less an Epicurean than a Cyrenaic; or, if you like, an Alexandrian. He is the representative of a period of 'décadence' which puts a premium on a refined sensualism and derives its pleasure from the senses moderated by the intellect. He is hyper-civilized: 'J'ai le malheur', he says in the *Livre de mon ami*, 'de n'être pas un sauvage. J'ai lu beaucoup de livres sur l'antiquité de la terre et l'origine des espèces.' He has often been compared with Voltaire, but it is rather with certain tired and hyper-refined, over-intellectualized spirits of the end of the eighteenth century, such as Mme du Deffand, that he should be compared.

It is from this incapacity to experience the immediate that France's scepticism derives. Reality constitutes a screen of ideas, each and every one *equal in value*, and which become objects for intelligence to play with. It ceases to have 'value' and becomes an 'object' of indulgent irony. In short, it becomes a mere 'spectacle', an object of 'curiosity': 'J'ai été enclin de

tout temps à prendre la vie comme un spectacle', we read in the *Livre de mon ami*. The natural accompaniment of such a scepticism is a sense of the vanity of things, their essential 'equivalence' and eventual banality. 'Yes', France writes in the *Jardin d'Epicure*, 'I feel we live surrounded by a mere phantasmagoria, that our glimpse of the universe is purely the effect of the nightmare that breaks the restless sleep that is our life.'

This rupture with reality is well seen in his conception of love. The subject of *Le Lys rouge* is the impossibility of communication between lovers. His pessimism on this subject is well expressed in the following phrase of Coignard: 'Les âmes sont presque impénétrables les unes aux autres, et c'est ce qui nous monre le néant cruel de l'amour'. For the link which binds us to reality is the same as that which binds us to a person, it is of the nature of love, immediacy of feeling.

Much has been said of France's humour (with particular reference to works like *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* and *La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédaueque*). Albert Thibaudet, with many others, claims that France is the only French writer to employ humour of the English type, the humour of Swift, Fielding and Dickens. (Edmund Gosse, it will be remembered, declared him the most English of French writers.) But although there is in such works deliberate pastiche of their style, I do not think that France's world is really 'humorous'. The humour of a Fielding or a Dickens has a principal source in contact with life and men; their humorous world is seen from the inside, and in it they participate. But it is precisely this intimate relationship which is denied to Anatole France. Moreover it is also true that his universe is only incidentally 'comic', for the comic implies a deliberate rupture of contact, of the nature of the Cartesian doubt, with life and existence, a contact which it presupposes. It is the obverse side of a 'tragic'. The comic of Molière, for example, presupposes such a rupture of contact and rejoins from time to time the tragic, whenever this contact is renewed. But in France there is no real contact with life to provide a basis either for a tragic or a comic view of things.

In short, the world of France is that of the pure ironist and sceptic, a world without value; the prevailing sentiment it inspires is of the vanity, nothingness of all things.

France claims to combine his irony with pity: 'The more I

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think over human life, the more I am persuaded we ought to choose Irony and Pity as its assessors and judges. . . . Irony and Pity are both of good counsel; the first with her smiles makes life agreeable; the other sanctifies it to us with her tears', for 'it is through pity we remain truly men.' Now, humour does not exclude pity, but France's world is not at bottom one of humour. France's pity is simply an aspect of his scepticism; true pity is impossible without feeling, his is mere 'indulgence' and largely contempt. (And this is true even of Crainquebille in his *démêlés* with justice; what prevails is the sense of fatuity, inanity at the spectacle of a puppet involved in a mechanism.)

Passing now to France's ideas, he, of course, in true Epicurean and Cyrenaic fashion, extols the life of pleasure moderated by intelligence and seasoned with sweet reason. His preference goes to Alexandria and the eighteenth century, periods which have seen the triumph of reason and pleasure over the forces of asceticism and fanaticism which threaten the happy and pleasant life. His chief rôle at the end of the century indeed has been to maintain the cultural values of humanism. What he dislikes in religion, especially Christianity, is its tendency to intolerance and fanaticism, at bottom its 'moralism'. He attacks all varieties of such moralism, Stoicism, Revolutionary virtue, etc.—that is all Idealisms which, by setting a premium on virtue and the heroic, intense life, lead to the rigours of asceticism and fanaticism. The Christian ascetic, Rousseau and Robespierre are all of a type.

But religion itself may be a source of sensual pleasure. He remarks that 'persons of great piety or high artistic sensibility infuse into Religion or Art a refined sensuality.' He is attracted by the Polytheism of the Greeks and the religions of Alexandria, where, by their number, mythologies add a source of æsthetic pleasure to life. Christianity itself furnishes new sources of pleasure by introducing the sense of sin: 'La religion', we read in *Le Génie latin*, 'offre aux âmes voluptueuses une volupté de plus: la volupté de se perdre'. When Fra Giovanni succumbs to the doubts inspired by Satan, he addresses him thus: 'Je t'aime parce que tu es ma misère et mon orgueil, ma joie et ma douleur, la splendeur et la cruauté des choses, parce que tu es le désir et la pensée, et parce que tu m'as rendu semblable à toi.' Indeed, Christianity not only introduces the sense of sin, but makes sin the way to God; it is the doctrine of Choulette and l'abbé

Coignard that only the sinner can repent and thus merit heaven; the prostitute and the sensualist are near to God. When asked of what use his faith is to him, apart from being a source of poetic inspiration, Choulette replies: 'A pécher, Madame.'

To one who contemplates without believing, the religious provides high æsthetic enjoyment; for, of course, France does not believe: 'J'avoue que j'aime ces histoires merveilleuses auxquelles je ne crois pas', says M. Bergeret. In his estimate of religion it is the æsthete who dominates and who declares: 'there is nothing true in the world save beauty'.

It is in the *Révolte des Anges* that France has given the most powerful expression of his ideas on the drama of man and the universe. Thibaudet has spoken of France's predilection for the *roman-mythe* and compared him with Gide. This is not quite accurate. A myth is strictly a belief clothed in a sensible form; it is the product of the individual's immediate reaction to the universe, which is then interpreted in abstract terms, and this interpretation then clothed in a sensible form. At the root is an immediate experience, a belief, of which the myth is the poetic form. Such is the myth of André Gide, who has preserved the faculty of the primitive mind to form such immediate beliefs and clothe them poetically (cf. *Le Prométhée mal enchaîné*). But France has no such immediate reaction to the universe; he has no beliefs. What he does is to employ the myth form as a literary and philosophical device; his myths are fictions contrived by the author as a vehicle for his ideas. Such a fiction is the *Révolte des Anges*, a fiction incorporating consciously a mythology borrowed from the Gnostics and Manichees. But within these limits, it presents a complete 'diabolic' interpretation of the universe (which is in certain respects a continuation of the 'satanism' of Vigny and Hugo).

The scene is in Paris where a group of angels has assembled with a view to preparing a new revolt against God. In the course of their discussions the universal history is unfolded to us. God or Ialdabaoth appears as a brutal, ignorant and tyrannical being, a mere demiurge who assumed control over and organized a small part of the eternal universe, precisely this earth, but who gained ascendancy over man and angel by his pretence to have created it and to be infinite in power. Satan is presented as a champion of truth and beauty who, seeing through this fraud and resenting

this tyranny, revolted with his companions against God—only to be cast from heaven. Thereupon they set themselves the task of enlightening man and freeing him from the tyranny of the dark God; the history of humanity becomes the centre of a struggle between Satan and Ialdabaoth, Good and Evil, Truth and Falsehood. Clothing themselves in the forms of the Greek Gods, Satan and his angels had their first success in Greece, inaugurating the reign of truth and beauty on earth: ‘tout y était grâce, harmonie, mesure et sagesse’. But Ialdabaoth prepares his *revanche*; by spreading the fantasy of original sin and redemption he regains control of man and subjects him to tyranny, falsehood and fanaticism for a long age. But Satan and his followers are at work, impelling towards truth, knowledge and beauty; from the Renaissance onwards, with the appearance of science and enlightenment, the prestige of Ialdabaoth slowly declines. However, the conclusion of the book is frankly pessimistic. The angels urge Satan to lead the revolt. About to accede to their request, he has a dream wherein he sees himself victorious. But once established, he sees himself become a tyrant; to maintain his power over men he resorts to the same trickery as Ialdabaoth; the latter revolts and is cast out. And he, in his turn, learning by suffering the value of truth and beauty, becomes the inspirer of mankind. ‘Dieu vaincu deviendra Satan, Satan vainqueur deviendra Dieu.’ He refuses to lead a new revolt, counselling his angels to continue their work, extirpating in themselves and in man the grosser forms of evil and ignorance, cultivating man’s love of beauty and truth. ‘Nous avons détruit Ialdabaoth, notre tyran, si nous avons détruit en nous l’ignorance et la peur.’ This general Manichean conception expresses fully France’s views on man’s nature and destiny. The universe is the centre of a conflict between Good and Evil which will never cease. Evil is not only a fact, but a necessity for the moral life. ‘Si . . . le mal disparaissait jamais’, he writes in the *Vie Littéraire*, ‘il emporterait avec lui tout ce qui fait le prix de la vie, il dépoillerait la terre de sa parure et de sa gloire . . . On ne verrait plus couler ni le sang des héros, ni les larmes des amants, plus douces que leurs baisers.’ ‘Two things working together to one end—God’s grace and the Devil’s.’ For without evil there would be no suffering and therefore no pity, and these are the forces which impel man towards truth and beauty, ‘Misfortune is our greatest

master and our best friend', says Choulette. 'To it we owe all that is good in us, all that makes life worth living, to it we owe pity, and courage, and all the virtues', we read in the *Jardin d'Epicure*. It was suffering which impelled Satan, after the fall, to inspire mankind with the love of truth and beauty: 'Nous devons nous applaudir', he says to his companions when they are thrown into hell, 'de connaître la douleur, puisqu'elle nous révèle des sentiments nouveaux, plus précieux et plus doux que tous ceux qu'on éprouve dans la bonté éternelle, puisqu'elle nous inspire l'amour et la pitié, inconnus aux cieux'. And in his dream Satan sees God, by his experience of suffering, inspired with pity of man and taking up the task of his enlightenment and liberation.

But this same Manichean conception is pessimistic. The conclusion of the *Révolte des Anges* is that Good and Evil will always exist, even though one replaces the other. All we can hope to do is to establish a sort of equilibrium by eliminating the grosser forms of evil. Evil is a necessary element of the whole. 'Le mal est-il dans la nature des choses ou dans leur arrangement?' asks Arcade in the *Révolte des Anges*; France's answer is that it is in the nature of things.

It may be noted that, while inverting the rôles, France preserves the Christian view of humanity: for him man is bad rather than good. Zita criticizes Istar for his innocence in believing in the goodness of man. 'Le bien n'est point dans l'homme', cries Fra Giovannini. For this reason France does not believe in humanity as such; at the most the slow process of time which will bring to light new species. 'Let us hope then—not in humanity . . . rather let us set our hopes on the creatures our minds cannot conceive, that shall one day be developed out of mankind, as man has been evolved from the brute.' The relic of Darwinian Evolutionism provides a feeble basis for a fainter hope.

To return now to Anatole France the man, the above-quoted passages on suffering and pity testify to an awareness of life's deeper significance. But they remain abstract; it is France's tragedy never as a man to experience real intensity of feeling; and this precludes him from anything but an intellectual scepticism which envisages the universe as a spectacle and an object or irony. Yet it would seem that at times France realized the limitations of his scepticism and deplored his intellectualism. 'Mon esprit', says Coignard, 'est tout gâté par la réflexion.'

'There is always a moment', France writes in a significant passage of the *Jardin d'Epicure*, 'when curiosity becomes a sin.' He longed for that capacity for spontaneous belief which he had so often depicted. He realized 'that the ideals of sentiment and the visions of faith are invincible forces, and that it is by no means reason that governs mankind' and that 'existence would be intolerable, were we forbidden all dreams.'

We might venture to suggest that France's socialism has its origin in this state of disquietude, in the desire to feel and act. It was an act of will-power, an effort to regain contact with man: 'Il faut, pour servir les hommes', says Coignard, 'rejeter toute raison, comme un bagage embarrassant, et s'élever sur les ailes de l'enthousiasme. Si l'on raisonne, on ne s'envolera jamais.' And that, even though faith was lacking; for his scepticism precludes faith in man. (In his younger day she was a Boulangiste and throughout, anti-parliamentarian. *L'Histoire Contemporaine* is as much a criticism of democratic institutions as of the anti-dreyfusards.) Once, however, his reason showed him where the truth and right lay, he *willed* himself to defend them even when the faith, which is their true basis, was lacking. As for the content of his Socialism, it was more negative than positive; he had no belief in scientific Socialism; his was rather a vision of society minus its intolerance and clericalism.

Now if what characterizes France's mentality is *art* and *artificiality* (in the best sense) they characterize his style no less. Like the Parnassians, he pays scrupulous attention to form (his opposition to the Naturalists was largely directed against their neglect of form). Considered generally, France's style is highly imitative. For this reason it is not quite accurate to describe him as a classicist. True, he defines the perfect style as one of simplicity. But for the classicist the simple style is the 'natural' style, the immediate, spontaneous expression of thought. For France, on the other hand, this simplicity is rather the product of artificial arrangement and combination. 'True simplicity', he writes, 'is only apparent, and results solely from the fine co-ordination and sovereign economy of the several parts of the whole.' And again: 'L'imagination assemble et compare; elle ne crée jamais.' And indeed France's own style is highly eclectic and composite: Chateaubriand, Flaubert, Voltaire, 'Renan serve as the models for an exquisitely constructed style. (In this respect

André Gide is, both in theory and in practice, more truly classical.) Several French critics of repute have been sensitive to this 'artificiality' of France's style; Thibaudet goes so far as to declare that it gives him the impression of an Englishman writing French, and compares him with Hamilton, the author of the *Mémoires du comte de Grammont*, who wrote at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, from so many sources France has created for himself a highly original style. If now we look at the quality of the style proper, we find the same *art*. Transparent, reticent, subtle, as the seventeenth-century classical style; it is highly abstract, bare, delicate, compared, for example, with the full, colourful style of Barrès. Denuded of all concreteness, it is marked rather by its subtlety and its exquisiteness—a triumph of form and artistry, refinement and subtilization.

Taken together, these two elements of his style, imitativeness and 'constructedness' on the one hand, exquisiteness and subtlety of expression on the other, reveal France, in his style no less than in his thought, as an Alexandrian, an exquisite artificer—or if you like an Attic, a sort of French Walter Pater.

### III

The essential factor in Anatole France's mentality is the incapacity for immediate sensation and feeling. Sensations are at once decanted of their concrete content, leaving only refined abstractions. The data of his experience are not the 'immediate data of consciousness', to employ Bergson's terminology, not concrete sensations, but what we might call 'pure sensations'. And it is this abstraction which is at once the defect of his works and the source of their charm. A defect, in that they shut him off from the existent reality and transform it into a world of indifferent objects to be treated as a spectacle (a defect in a novelist). A source of charm, in that the world he presents to our gaze has an æsthetic perfection of a quite special type. The universe he offers us, abstracted from all that is contingent, is situated in a sort of eternity, a sort of Eleatic immobility. In this respect he has some similarity with Mallarmé, who seeks in much the same way to abstract the pure eternal elements of sensation and reconstruct a world of pure sensations or 'Ideas' beyond time. The world of France is a world where all is 'equal', 'equivalent'

and, as it were, without value (for value implies existence). This sentiment of 'nothingness', 'immobility', 'sameness', is the feeling that prevails in and the conclusion of such works as the *Révolte des Anges* and the *Ile des Pingouins*. If we were to interpret France as a philosopher, it would be as a sort of Eleatic or modern Parmenides, for whom the real substance of the universe would be 'immobility' and 'permanence' underlying appearance and change.

Moreover, it is to this artificiality and abstraction that we owe France's rôle as defender of the cultural values, or at least cultural forms of humanism; refinement, tolerance, etc. He represents the fine flower of our humanistic civilization: a modern Alexandrian, comparable in England with Walter Pater. And this precisely because he transcends the passions of existence. For, as Clive Bell has suggested, 'civilization' is incompatible with strong beliefs and passionate feeling and all that France calls 'virtue'.

The influence of France has been non-existent in contemporary French literature, and the reason is not hard to find. The sceptical, intellectual view of life was quickly superseded after the war. This view of life demands an attitude towards reality no longer recognized as valid; what Kierkegaard and the contemporary philosophers of Existence call an 'objective' attitude, that is precisely the treating of reality and the self included as a 'spectacle' or 'object of curiosity'.

The trend of contemporary thought is towards an *existential* approach: the individual starts from his implication, directly through sensation and feeling, in the reality about him; from his self as an existing, suffering, believing being. And his effort is aimed at seizing, transcendent yet immanent within him, his own true self, that of others and that of the universe. He therefore puts a premium on immediate personal experience; and on valuating, for value has its source in such personal experience of suffering, love, belief, etc. The works of Gide, Rivière, Claudel and Proust all testify to the necessity of this direct personal approach to reality; and all aim at regaining, through personal experience, an immediate contact with whatever is most real in the self and with reality at large. France's world—a world without value, an object without meaning, towards which the self is as an indifferent spectator—a world of irony where there is neither comedy nor tragedy, because never *felt* in personal experience, is without relevance to the writers and philosophers of today.

Nevertheless, the sceptical, ironical current has played and always will play a large part in French literature. And Anatole France has his place, and that no small a one, in the great French intellectualist tradition which has its roots in the eighteenth century. This, coupled with the charm of his style, his gift as a *raconteur* and the play of his Gallic wit, will assure his reputation among all who have not lost the taste for a literature which can please, amuse and delight, no less than instruct.

Yet there is more to it than that. The sceptical attitude, it should be stressed, is no less necessary to man than one of intensity. So necessary that it is customary, in the progress of thought, for one to follow the other. For, as the Existentialists tend to overlook, scepticism and irony, too, have their rôle to play in the elaboration of values. They serve to temper the loves and hates, the passions and hysterias of existence. And, in so doing, they generalize and universalize the values of 'passionate' experience, with its danger of solipsism and egocentrism, transforming them from what might become, as with a Senancour or Amiel, a mere subjective mood or state, into fruitful moral forces at the disposal of society and humanity as a whole. They are thus a chief instrument of the preservation of the universal, humanistic attitude. If our European civilization survives, as it surely will, the strain of present events and makes the necessary compromises, a new period of humanism and refinement will no doubt be inaugurated. If and when the pendulum swings back, Anatole France will come into his own and regain his small, but significant niche in literature.

## CLEMENT GREENBERG SURREALIST PAINTING

SURREALISM is the only programmatic and more or less compact æsthetic movement aside from Pre-Raphaelitism to affect directly more than one of the arts. The number of parallels between the two movements—already glimpsed by Herbert Read and R. H. Wilenski—are surprising. Both are inspired by an ambition which looked first to change the décor and then the structure itself of industrial society. Dissatisfaction with the state of the arts grew

into a more radical dissatisfaction with the very quality of life, which could vent itself only through politics.

Like the Pre-Raphaelites, the Surrealists have gone, although less consciously, in two different directions. Morris and Ruskin made their way to revivalist socialism, while the other Pre-Raphaelites, reconciling themselves to the *status quo*, became fashionable missionaries of æstheticism and religiosity. The orthodox Surrealists have stood firm on socialism, yet their stand has not kept Surrealism from becoming largely identified with the younger generation of smart international bohemia, to whom the movement has furnished a new principle of taste. The desire to change life on the spot, without waiting for the revolution, and to make art the affair of everybody is Surrealism's most laudable motive, yet it has led inevitably to a certain vulgarization of modern art. The attempt is made to depress it to a popular level instead of raising the level of popularity itself. The anti-institutional, anti-formal, anti-æsthetic nihilism of the Surrealists— inherited from Dada with all the artificial nonsense entailed—has in the end proved a blessing to the restless rich, the expatriates, and æsthete-flaneurs in general who were repelled by the asceticism of modern art. Surrealist subversiveness justifies their way of life, sanctioning the peace of conscience and the sense of chic with which they reject arduous disciplines. Not all the steadfastness of its leader in protesting against corruption wherever he could see it has prevented this ambivalence in the effects of Surrealism from eating back into and corrupting Surrealism itself.

The Pre-Raphaelites, for all Ruskin's insistence on going to Nature 'in all singleness of heart', looked mostly to the past for inspiration as to motifs, style, and décor. The Surrealists, promoting a newer renascence of the 'Spirit of Wonder', have cast back to those periods after the Middle Ages which were fondest of the marvellous and which most exuberantly exercised the imagination: the Baroque, the late eighteenth century, and the Romantic and Victorian nineteenth century. Surrealism has revived all the Gothic revivals and acquires more and more of a period flavour, going in for Faustian lore, old-fashioned and flamboyant interiors, alchemistic mythology, and whatever else is held to be the excesses in taste of the past. Surrealism is 'advanced', but its notion of the future is not too unlike the comic-strip fantasies about the twenty-first century.

The effects of Surrealism in art and literature have differed in much the same way as did those of Pre-Raphaelitism. In both cases literature has benefited more than painting—English poetry through the Rossettis and through Swinburne (who was at least influenced by Pre-Raphaelitism); French letters through Eluard, Aragon, Breton, and others. Both movements were essentially literary and placed all emphasis on the anecdotal, notwithstanding that the Pre-Raphaelite movement was made up largely of painters and that both Pre-Raphaelite and Surrealist poetry bears a strong pictorial impress. The pictures of the Pre-Raphaelites form a doubtful contribution, ratifying literary vices habitual to English art; while in the arts and crafts Morris and his followers practised little more than antiquarianism. A good deal of Surrealist painting has similarly suffered from being literary and antiquarian.

Surrealist writing more or less fulfils the Surrealist theory of creation as an automatic procedure uncontrolled by reason or the deliberate consciousness. Inspiration is induced by surrender to immediate impulse and to accident; thus the writer—or painter—reveals his unconscious to himself and to his audience, whose own unconscious is stirred by echoes. But in the practice of painting it is much harder than in that of poetry—though equally difficult in theory—to tell where the unconscious stops and the reasoning will takes over. The poet, subjecting his invention to metre or rhyme or logic, knows that he thereby suspends the automatic process. But the Surrealist painter, beginning with the first thing that comes into his mind—with accidents met in the manipulation of his tools, or with hints from the seams and texture of Leonardo's old wall, finding in these ways suggested resemblances to actual objects, which he proceeds to improve upon—the painter is not so apt to realize that he interrupts the automatic procedure the moment he begins to enhance these resemblances by methods taught in art school. For the trained painter can exercise the consciously acquired habits of his craft while seeming to absent his mind's attention and rely solely on his hand and eye. This, however, is not the same as automatic creation. Rubens had Plutarch and Seneca read to him while he painted, but he did not withdraw his conscious attention from his work, he simply divided it, like any painter one knows who can carry on a conversation while working. There was indeed an element of automatism in Ruben's

art, as there is in all successful art, but it was not the primary factor in the process by which it was created.

The difference between automatism as a primary and as a secondary factor is responsible for the two different directions in which Surrealist painting has moved. On the one side are Miró, Arp, Masson, Picasso, and Klee—the last two of whom are claimed by the Surrealists without their ever having formally attached themselves to the movement. On the other side are Ernst, Tanguy, Roy, Magritte, Oelze, Fini, and a myriad more, including Dali, who was several years ago excommunicated by the orthodoxy for political, not artistic, deviations. With the first group automatism may be relatively complete or incomplete, but in either case it is primary as a rule and intervenes decisively—even though it is impossible to determine with any satisfying exactness where in their painting the automatic stops and the conscious begins. The artist may doodle his picture from start to finish, or he may elaborate accidentally discovered representational elements, or he may begin with a definite eidetic image. But he will never use methods learned at art school, and the resemblances to actual phenomena will be schematic rather than realistic. A dog barking at the moon is indicated by certain unmistakable signs, but these are in the nature of provocations to the artist's 'painterly' imagination, which seizes upon the signs as excuse for elaborating shapes and colours which do not image anything possible even as an idea off the flat picture surface. The dog and the moon become the springboard, not the subject of the work. Here the reliance upon the unconscious and the accidental serves to lift inhibitions which prevent the artist from surrendering, as he needs to, to his medium. In such surrender lies one of the particular advantages of modern art. Surrealism, under this aspect and only under this, culminates the process which has in the last seventy years restored painting to itself and enabled the modern artist to rival the achievements of the past.

The other direction of Surrealist painting can best be charted by fixing the almost invariable point at which the automatic procedure stops. Here too inspiration is sought by doodling, or in accidents of the medium, but it is found most often in images offering themselves spontaneously and irrationally to the artist's mind before he picks his brush up. Sometimes he claims to do nothing more than transcribe a dream. But even the doodling,

the rubbing of pencil on paper over a rough surface, or the observation of Leonardo's old wall is a means primarily of anticipating or inducing images, not of creating the picture itself. Automatism is made a secondary factor; for this type of Surrealist painting wishes to preserve the identifiable image at all costs, and complete automatism goes too far in the direction of the abstract.

Having received his inspiration, the painter most consciously goes to work to clothe the given image in pictorial forms that will produce a strong illusion of its possible existence in the world of real appearances. The subject matter is different, but the result is the same that the nineteenth-century academic artist sought. It makes no difference that the creatures, anatomies, substances, landscapes, or juxtapositions limned by the Surrealist violate the laws of probability; they do not violate the modalities of three-dimensional vision—to which painting can now conform only by methods that have become academic. For all the problems involved in transferring faithfully the visual experience of three dimensions to a plane surface have been solved by this time, and where all the problems have been solved only academicism is possible. The Surrealist represents his more or less fantastic images in sharp and literal detail, as if they had been posed for him. Seldom does he violate any of the canons of academic technique, and he vies with and sometimes imitates colour photography, even to the very quality of his paint. Dali's discontinuous planes and contradictory perspectives approximate photomontage. Ernst's volcanic landscapes look like exceptionally well manufactured scenic postal cards.

The Surrealist motive for a naturalistic technique is plain. The more vividly, literally, painstakingly the absurd and the fantastic are represented, the greater their shock. For the sake of hallucinatory vividness the Surrealists have copied the effects of the calendar reproduction, postal card, chromotype, and magazine illustration. In general they prize the qualities of the popular reproduction because of its incongruously prosaic associations and because the reproduction heightens illusionistic effect by erasing paint texture and brushstroke.

Another motive is the desire to sin against decorum, violate all the rules, do the disreputable thing, and attach oneself to whatever seems discredited. Advanced painting since the Impressionists has established a certain decorum, a notion of the aesthetically

relevant, which the Surrealists find pompous, as they profess to find all relevancies pompous (this makes another of the possible rationalizations of the disassociated or disconnected image). Dali turned on post-cubist painting, praised Meissonier and commercial illustrations, and asserted his contempt for 'formal' values by the deliberate but just as often unconscious negligences of his own painting. Thus he made a virtue of his shortcomings. Granted that irreverence has a necessary function in our time, yet irreverence as puerile and as widely welcome as Dali's is no more revolutionary than fascism. But of course, Dali is not to be taken seriously as anything other than a symptom. He is the Ossian of our day.

The decisive question is whether the Surrealist image, as illustrated in the works of Ernst, Dali, Tanguy and the other painters of their kind, provides painting with a really new subject-matter. That is, must hitherto untapped possibilities of the medium be explored in order to accommodate the Surrealist image? As far as painting alone is concerned, does it involve a new way of seeing as well as new things to be seen? For such painters as Miró, Arp, Masson, and Picasso, it certainly does. But not for Ernst, Dali, Tanguy, Oelze, Roy, Magritte, or Dominguez, Brauner, Delvaux, Fini, *e tutti quanti*, who do indeed see new things, but no differently in essence than painters of the past would have seen them had they accepted Surrealist notions of subject-matter. The Surrealist image is thus a new object to be posed and arranged, but it requires no fundamental change in the conventions of painting as established by the Renaissance. Given the same subjects, Meissonier, Ford Madox Brown, or Greuze would have approached the same effects. There would be the same modelling, shading, and spacing, and the same colour schemes, although the hues themselves would be a little less saccharine or brassy and a little less unbroken.

The Surrealist image provides painting with new anecdotes to illustrate, just as current events supply new topics to the political cartoonist, but of itself it does not charge painting with a new subject-matter. On the contrary, it has promoted the rehabilitation of academic art under a new literary disguise. The maxim *nulla sine narratione ars* is true enough, now as before, but the Surrealists have interpreted it vulgarly to mean that there can be no picture without an anecdote. The tradition of painting which runs from

Manet through Impressionism, Fauvism, and Cubism has created the first original art style since the French Revolution, and the only original one of which our bourgeois society has been capable. All its other styles are revivals. That style is now threatened for the first time from the inside by Surrealist painters, and by the Neo-Romantics and 'Magic Realists' who bring up their train. These painters, though they claim the title of *avant-garde* artists, are revivers of the literal past and advance agents of a new conformist, and best-selling art.

The Surrealists have, like the Pre-Raphaelites, reinvigorated academicism by their personal gifts—which are undeniable—and by going to either a remoter or a more discredited past for guidance; in distinction from self-confessed academicists, who try to keep abreast of the times by watering down yesterday's advanced art. Taking their lead and most original impulse from Chirico—that archaizer who made a small but valid contribution—the Surrealists prefer Mantegna, Bosch, Vermeer, and Böcklin to the Impressionists. This does not make their painting any the less academic, but it does make it livelier, disturbing, and more attractive to new talents: adroit talents who read Rimbaud have a sense of format, finish, and *mise en scène*—and can at least draw seriously. (The drawings of Ernst, Dali, and especially Tanguy are adventurous and original in a way that their paintings are not. The compelled economy of the line exposes their art to problems which are on the order of the day and which they otherwise evade by taking refuge in the ancient arsenal, provided by the traditions of oil painting.)

Prompted by a real dissatisfaction with contemporary life, the art of these Surrealists is essentially one of vicarious wish-fulfilment. Its very horrors are nostalgic and day-dreamy, having associations with a more pleasant-seeming past, which is resuscitated in brighter, iridescent colours, smoother contours, glossier surfaces, and sharper outlines. The artist shows us how he would prefer life to look or how—as children do—he would prefer to be frightened. His wish is painted with such an illusion of super-reality as to make it seem on the brink of realization in life itself. The result is indeed a new and interesting kind of pictorial literature, but it is more literature or document than painting or art.

It is possible, I believe, to construct faithful duplicates in wax, papier mâché, or rubber of most of the recent paintings, of Ernst,

Dali, and Tanguy. Their 'content' is conceivable, and too much so, in other terms than those of paint. But the pictures of Picasso and Miró attain virtuality as art only through paint on a flat surface, and they would disappear utterly if translated elsewhere. Which is also true of the works of the old masters.

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## JAMES SORLEY A FUNERAL

A PARTY of thirty sailors and one officer were landed on an island in the Aegean one morning in October last year. They came from one of the destroyers which had bombarded the enemy batteries on the island and forced the garrison to surrender. The sailors were, as usual, a cheerful, foul-mouthed lot drawn from the slum towns of England. That morning they were excited by the prospect of spending some days ashore and by the fact that they were the first troops to land after the enemy had surrendered.

The party landed in the ship's boats and then had crossed a wide bay, where the water was clear and blue, to a little village, with a jetty, which was the principal port of the island. The bay was surrounded by mountains which were terraced and partly covered with evergreen trees.

On the jetty there was a crowd and as the boats came alongside it was clear that this was a reception committee to make the occasion memorable. A guard of honour lined the stone steps at the landing place, they were armed with Italian rifles and presented arms as the young officer stepped ashore. Green laurel branches were scattered on the steps and along the quay. As the sailors landed they were offered sweetmeats and mastika and rose water was sprinkled on their greasy battledress.

At first the greetings had been given and received in a somewhat embarrassed way. Presently, however, when the ancient formalities had been honoured, the ice thawed, there were embraces from all ages and both sexes and friendships sprang up everywhere. The sailors were accepted as welcome and highly honoured guests.

The day's work was completed when the Italian garrison of

about 600 had been transferred to the warships lying in the bay and when several tons of white flour had been landed for distribution to the islanders. Late that afternoon when the sun had already sunk behind the mountains the British men-o'-war weighed anchor and disappeared behind the headland and the naval party and a Greek officer who had joined them were left to look after the island.

That night the island was free from foreign rule for the first time in centuries. The people could scarcely realize what this entailed and they regarded the British and Greek officers as their new governors. These two had to advise on every kind of problem and they helped to establish a crude system of government. The islanders were unwilling to set up an authority for the whole island, which they felt would be too remote and arbitrary and so each village and its district set up a local committee. What laws were enforced was never clear but considering all the circumstances the order in the island was remarkable.

The white flour was distributed as fairly as possible according to the number of inhabitants of each place and the day following this distribution a delegation from each village appeared at the naval headquarters with sweet cakes cooked with the white flour. This was the standard of manners which the islanders maintained throughout, their every action was intended to express gratitude for the liberation of the island and to show the British sailors that they were to feel at home during their stay.

The naval party had taken over a large building which had formerly been the Italian headquarters. As a precaution a sentry was kept at the door day and night, armed with a revolver and working in three watches, that is to say four hours on and eight off. At midnight, about a week after the arrival of the British, the sentry was being relieved, a ceremony which consisted of the relief sentry being handed the revolver in its webbing, probably accompanied by a few obscene comments. That night some clumsiness, carelessness or lightheartedness, probably a mixture of all three, fired the revolver, the relief sentry was shot through the stomach and he died in a few minutes.

The sailor, who was killed, was little more than a boy. He was called James Riddell, he had been a year in the Navy and his papers showed that his next-of-kin was his mother, who lived at Wallsend on the Tyne. It was a wretched tragedy, no blame

could be attached to anyone, except possibly to those who teach young sailors to handle firearms. The boy was dead and the body was put away in a room and was covered by a blanket. The naval officer lay awake all night shattered by the whole affair and tried to think how he could arrange a proper funeral.

The next morning the news of the tragedy had already reached the people of the island, and a small solemn deputation appeared at the headquarters. The leader first expressed the islanders' grief and then asked if they could be allowed to arrange the funeral. They would provide the coffin, the grave would be in the little cemetery, which was high on the cliff behind the harbour, a gravestone would be carved, the priest would conduct the service and he—the leader of the deputation—would like to make a speech at the graveside. The generosity of the offer would have been impossible to refuse in any circumstances and the problem of the funeral had been a great worry to the young officer.

It was therefore agreed that the burial should be in two days' time and that the Navy's only responsibility should be to provide the bearers and that a guard of honour should be formed at the graveside.

The body of Riddell was put into a fine, well-made coffin twenty-four hours after he was killed, and on the morning of the funeral the coffin was covered by a White Ensign and put on a handcart. Some of the sailors drew the cart and the rest fell in behind and formed something of a *cortège*. The big house which formed the headquarters was out of sight of the graveyard and they had to go through the little town at the port and then up the hill a short way. As they passed through the town the sailors were surprised that nobody was about, there were no children even to stare at the sad little procession. They turned out of the town towards the cemetery and presently they came to the spot where the coffin had to be lifted on to the shoulders of eight bearers. At that place they had their first view of the graveyard. A great crowd of several hundred people was gathered there, each one with flowers in his hands, the sailors carrying the coffin hesitated when they saw the crowd, hardly believing their eyes, knowing that this number must mean that people had come from every corner of the island.

The funeral started, the priest conducted the orthodox service and he was followed by the naval officer who repeated a makeshift

prayer which contained all the phrases which he remembered as being part of the English funeral service. Then, before the whole congregation walked slowly by the grave to put their flowers on the body of the dead English boy, the man who had led the deputation came forward and stood beside the gravestone on which was written: 'James Riddell, born May 1925, died October 1944. R.I.P.' He made the speech with great dignity and emotion. 'Poor boy! You have come so far to die, and the war which your country has fought for the world is nearly finished. You died in a tragic accident far from your home in strange and unfamiliar surroundings. In spite of your distance from your family you will not be alone, for we will be your family, we have made you a grave and we will maintain it as if you were our son. We will put flowers upon it and we will remember you as the Englishman who died in our island so that we could be free, as so many other of your countrymen have died all over the world, that the world should be free.'

The crowd were deeply moved by this speech and many were in tears. The naval officer looked across the blue water of that lovely bay, 'lost in the silence of the Cyclades,' and wondered how in the future we would justify the high hope that had been placed in us, and whether an account of the day's events would bring comfort to Mrs. Riddell in the grime and loneliness of her Tyneside home.

## BRIAN DIMMICK

### SWISS SANCTUARY

ALL frontiers have romantic associations. Even for the imperturbable British Tourist who goes through with his imposing blue passport and nothing to hide, the sudden concentration of the symbols of State Authority, barricades, armed soldiers, police, customs and plainclothes men, constitutes a theatrical insert in any journey. Behind these symbols there lies, in peace or war, a continual struggle between the State and an unorganized guerrilla army of smugglers. Like all successful guerrillas from Robin Hood to the F.F.I., this contraband army is supported by the local population, every smuggler has several safe houses on

each side of the frontier where he can deposit his goods, lie in hiding for a few days, or merely get a drink or a meal *en passant*. He works hard. Enormous bales of tobacco, weighing half a hundredweight or more, have to be carried for miles through woods, rivers, marshes or barbed wire, and all the time there is the danger of a stray shot, a breathless chase, a heavy fine, a few months in prison.

War brings a big boom to smuggling. Scarcity and rationing mean soaring prices, and closed frontiers and political persecution mean new lines in smuggling; envelopes with valuable reports may pay more highly than a bale of tobacco, and an escaping family of Jews may produce stuffed notecases and jewellery. Just as the prisons of France have, during the occupation, housed for the first time many a respectable and high-principled bourgeois, so the regular smugglers, who know every stone and blade of grass on their secret paths leading to Spain or Switzerland, have been joined by a new class of traveller.

La Ferme des Trois Ruisseaux, five miles from Belfort, is owned by a Swiss family called Schaeffer. Monsieur Schaeffer is a widower with four grown-up sons and two daughters. It is late autumn. The family are finishing their evening meal in the dark, smoke-filled kitchen. On a heavy wooden table lie three bulging rucksacks containing bicycle tyres. In the barn beside the house is another group of people, all of whom look thoroughly out of place. Two New Zealand airmen, who think that berets and tattered jackets make them look like French peasants, are smoking their first Players (bought in Switzerland by Monsieur Schaeffer) for two months. They are trying unsuccessfully to make sense of the dialect of a Corporal of the Indian Army, who has walked all the way from a prison camp in Northern France. Lying on the straw in a corner is an enormous Belgian Jew, wearing a smart black suit and red bow tie. His wife is beside him, feeding a baby from a bottle. Their two sons, aged about eight and ten, are squatting at her feet. Father has opened a basket containing a roast chicken and the family are eating pieces of it in their fingers. In the distance the pop-popping of an auto-cycle can be heard. It approaches the farm and stops. Voices can be heard in the yard. There is a scuffle in the barn as everyone tries to hide under the straw or behind a rusty plough. As the door creaks open the voice of one of the Schaeffer boys calls out:

'N'ayez pas peur. J'ai encore un compagnon pour vous.'

A large blond man of about forty limps in. He sits down on a box near the door, says good evening politely, and closes his eyes. No one asks him a question. All these people have learnt that these days it is safer to mind their own business. If the blond man told them that a week ago he had jumped from a first floor window of a villa north of Belfort, where he was keeping company with four other 'condamnés à mort', he would have been suspected at once of being a 'mouchard de la Ges.'. And it would have been merely frivolous on his part if he had told them that for the last half hour he had been clinging to the back of the mythical Colonel Sansou, local 'chef de la Resistance,' who had driven him to the farm on the carrier of his 'moto'. It was getting dark when two other men arrived on bicycles. They came straight into the barn. The younger one took a ladder and climbed up to the protruding hayloft; the other hoisted the bikes up to him and stood waiting while he stowed them, and then fished out a sack from under the hay. He passed the sack down to his friend who took it carefully, undid the string at the top and extracted a Sten Gun and six magazines, which he examined and passed to the younger man who had by this time jumped down and joined him. He took out another gun for himself, and slinging it over his shoulder he beckoned to the others, who had been watching him closely.

'On va prendre un café dans la cuisine, et puis on mettra les voiles.'

He did not say any more. Only his strong Parigot accent gave an indication that he was not a local. He and his companion led the way out of the barn, and soon the whole group was standing round in the smoky kitchen, each with a steaming bowl of café au lait. Monsieur Schaeffer and the Sten Gun carriers discussed the prices of watches, of industrial diamonds and of Swiss francs, otherwise there was no conversation. Coffee finished, two of the Schaeffer boys and their father put on the rucksacks, said good-night to the rest of the family, and there was a muffled chorus of Bonsoirs, Bonne nuits, Au revoirs and Adieux, as they all shook hands and the travellers moved out into the muddy yard. With one of the armed men in front and another at the rear the party set off. The airmen were carrying heavy suitcases belonging to the Belgian family. The Indian was carrying the youngest boy on his shoulders. The mother, moaning a little, and tottering

through the mud on high heels, still clung to her baby. They walked for an hour and a half across fields and through woods, all the time moving up hill. At last they halted at the edge of a wood. One of the airmen tried to light a cigarette, but was rudely prevented from doing so by one of the men with a gun. A half moon came out from behind wispy rain clouds, and they could see in front of them a huge ploughed field. One far side a line of pylons stood out against the sky. It had been explained to them before they left the farm, that ten yards beyond those pylons was a cart track. The cart track was Swiss Territory. After ten minutes listening the party moved off again, stumbling almost at the double, across the sticky ploughed soil. They heard the electricity crackling through the wires as they passed the pylon. Once on the cart track the leaders stopped to give the others a chance to catch up. Down to the left the track seemed to lead towards the lights of a Swiss village. The men with guns explained that they should follow the track until they reached a barrier, where they would be stopped by Swiss soldiers, they themselves were going straight ahead. The Schaeffer contingent had already disappeared towards a light that was shining from a farmhouse window in the distance. In five minutes the Belgian family, the airmen, the Indian and the blond man were warming themselves round a tiled stove in the guardhouse of the Swiss Customs service. Another mixed bunch of refugees had sought and found Swiss Sanctuary.

The next morning they would be split up. All of them would spend the next three weeks under supervision, for the Swiss are strict about 'la quarantaine'. The Belgian family would be divided, the mother and children going to one camp, the father to another, the airmen to a special hotel, the Indian to another, and the blond man, because his identity was uncertain, would spend some nights in the local jail, until his case came up for trial. After the quarantine period, the Belgian, if he is lucky and can prove that he has money enough to keep himself and his family, will possibly be allowed to go and stay with friends in Geneva or Lausanne. If he has neither money nor friends in Switzerland, he will be sent to a work camp, where he will do agriculture or forestry, and his wife and children will live in a refugee cantonment. The airmen will join other members of the R.A.F. in another hotel, under less strict supervision from the Swiss. Everything

they may need, from toothbrushes to ski-ing equipment, is provided for them. If they want to do so they can apply to take a course at a Swiss University. The Indian will find himself in a villa with other Indian escapees. The blond man may be sent back across the frontier to France, or more likely will be placed in a camp with other Frenchmen, refugees from the Gestapo.

These are just a few of the different categories of refugees whom the Swiss have had to deal with in the last few years. In 1940 they received a Polish Division which had been fighting on the Western Front, along with thousands of French stragglers. They have had a continual stream of Jewish families from France. They have had parties of children from the cities of France, invited by Swiss families for a period of recuperation. Russians (not invited), escaping from German prison camps, have sought shelter in Switzerland. After the Mussolini collapse, 18,000 Italians crossed the Alps, followed by over 5,000 British P.O.W.s from Italian camps. Many of these were, to say the least of it, disappointed by their treatment at the hands of the Swiss authorities, who were often over zealous in their regulations. (Two interned soldiers, a Pole and a Russian were shot dead by a Swiss camp guard, because they failed to 'Halt and be recognized'.) One British officer wrote home to say he had had to sleep on straw on his arrival in Switzerland. His father quoted the letter in the *Daily Telegraph*, whereupon there was an outcry from the *Gazette de Lausanne*; 'Our poor soldiers have to sleep on straw during their "service" and anyhow what about all the Anglo-Saxon airman living in our luxury hotels.' About 200 British and American airmen, having evaded capture by the Germans, have walked into Switzerland during the war. These must not be confused with those who arrived direct by air, forced to land or directed by Swiss fighter planes to Dubendorff, the only field in Switzerland which is big enough for a Fortress to land in safety. There are now over a thousand of these, and they are more restricted in their movements than the so-called 'evaders'. At one time there were as many as 95,000 refugees in Switzerland, a large number for a nation of four million which must import or die.

Among all the different categories of refugees, none was more worrying to the Government than the potential War Criminals, and the problem ceased to be hypothetical when Edda Ciano appeared at Lugano. She was hurriedly pushed into a convent,

with her children, by the Swiss security officials. The Swiss public were allowed to know nothing about her arrival through their own Press or radio, until the fact became common knowledge through the careless talk of journalists and others who listened to the omniscient Atlantiksender. The same problem arose over Alfieri, the Fascist ex-minister. He was placed in a sanatorium. When his presence was finally admitted by the Swiss Government, it was announced that he was a very sick man. The Government must have breathed a sigh of relief when the Pétain-Laval caravan moved off from Belfort towards Germany.

The strictness of the Swiss censorship during the war is but one symptom of the surprisingly reactionary government of Switzerland, surprisingly because although reactionary in the strict political sense, in matters directly concerning the life of the people, its social policy is mainly enlightened and efficient. While the Communist Party is banned, and Monsieur Nicole, its leader, seems to spend each alternate month in jail, the workers, compared with other countries in continental Europe, are well fed, well clothed and well housed. Feeling ran very high indeed early this year over the unprecedented step of allowing a Socialist Deputy, Bundesrat Nobbs, a seat on the Federal Council, and this in spite of the fact that the Socialists have long had a majority in the Chamber, and were gaining votes at nearly all local elections, and yet the State Educational and Medical Systems of Switzerland make our brand new Bills on these subjects look dusty.

The explanation of these paradoxes is that Switzerland is the last survivor of the Age of the Enlightened Bourgeois. In Switzerland the best bourgeois standards still prevail; those standards which were respected and worthy of respect in Manchester when it was Free Trade, and in Hamburg when it was a Free City, are still, to a large extent valid in Zurich, Berne, Basle, Lausanne or Geneva.

From this reactionary and enlightened Democracy we have much to learn, not in the art of government, but in the material details of life, those details where the British are too frequently content to put up with the second best.

Happy Swiss, who does not know the trials of TRU or TOL, and who, from a public box in Geneva, can dial a number in Zurich and have his answer loud and clear within a minute. Happy Swiss who can rely on a good meal at the Bahnhof Buffet before taking a fast clean, comfortable train, which he knows will bring him to his

destination exactly on time. Happy Swiss, who can enjoy in the trams of Zurich the fastest, and most noiseless trams in the world. (The Zurich Corporation sees to it that every individual tramline is electro-welded to its neighbour, in order to eliminate uneven running.) The Swiss Post Office Savings Bank has an ingenious cheque system which greatly simplifies the sending or receiving of money by post. All over Switzerland there is one-standardized size for advertisement display posters. The blatancy and vulgarity of our giant hoardings is striking in contrast to the orderly good taste of their boards or pillars. In order to drown a competitor the Swiss advertiser is not forced to seek ever bigger and louder displays, but he seeks more skilful and persuasive artists. The result is impressive. In order to maintain a standard of poster advertising already high, a National Prize is awarded annually by the Government, and free display offered to the winners.

Finally Zurich boasts, what no British city can boast, a Palace of the Arts, which has been cunningly built around the old Concert Hall. Here there are smaller concert halls for chamber music, a huge Assembly Hall, with stage, lecture rooms, lounges, restaurants of varying prices and specialities, a roof garden, a tea garden and several different bars.

During the war the Press and radio, and to a certain extent, the stage and screen have been hampered by the censor. The censorship had two objects, the first to back up the strict neutrality policy of the Government, and the second to eliminate any signs of disunity among the Swiss people. As can well be imagined the censor was continuously attacked and counter-attacked by the left wing Press.

Standards of Swiss journalism are never lower and seldom brighter than those of the *News Chronicle*. Circulation is small and localized.

The Press of the *Suisse Romande* enjoyed sitting on the neutrality fence and poking occasional fun at the Allies. In the early days they were blatantly pro-Pétain, for Vichy resembled Geneva in more ways than one, but gradually, as conditions in France grew worse, and as more and more respectable collaborators turned their coats, the change was reflected on the northern shores of Lac Leman.

The editor of the *Journal de Genève*, René Payot, has gained a great and deserved reputation in eastern France for his weekly

talks on International Affairs from Sottens. It was said in France that only the children did not like Payot, because they had to stop playing and keep quiet when he was on the air at twenty-five past seven every Friday evening. It was of enormous importance to the French to have their B.B.C. news corroborated, as it often was, by this neutral observer, and he delighted them by very occasional digs at Laval and Vichy.

Two new papers have recently appeared, filling a gap in the Suisse Romande Press: *Servir* is a left wing weekly, very pro de Gaulle and anti-Nazi, contains good political and literary articles. Policy of the editor, Dardel, who has split away from the staff of *Curieux*, is to hitch French-Swiss culture back on to the French star, while guiding Swiss politics towards 'la révolution à l'anglaise'. *Labyrinthe* is devoted solely to the Arts, it is well written and well laid out. The first number contained photographs of the wartime work of Picasso and Matisse. Skira is now resuscitating his pre-war *Minotaure*.

Swiss films have not been remarkable during the war, and deserve the almost universal condemnation they get from the Swiss Press and Public. There is one exception, *Marie Louise*, which is a touching and too sentimental story of a French refugee girl from Fortress-bombed Rouen, who comes to stay with a gruff Swiss German. The girl, who was a genuine refugee child from France, acts with a simplicity and naturalness that Hollywood prodigies had almost made us forget. The photography is pleasant (old streets of Geneva were used for the Rouen scenes with great effect), and the marriage of the two languages, French and Swiss German, is a technical triumph. It was made by Praesens Film, script by Richard Schweizer. The same people are trying to repeat their success with a story about British evaders and Italian refugees from North Italy, but are continually being stalled by the Military, Federal and Territorial Police. American films about their own war effort were generally disapproved of, though American films about the British war effort were highly popular. Everyone had seen and cried over *Mrs. Miniver* and *This Above All*, and agreed that these two films portrayed the real England they knew so well. *In Which We Serve* was popular, too, but had not the same red plushy appeal as *Mrs. Miniver*. It was incidentally one of the very few British films which reached Switzerland. *Desert Victory* has

only just been released from the Censor's icebox in Berne, where it has been lying for over a year. A few excellent French films were shown which one hopes will soon be showing here. The Germans only gave export permits to films produced by the German controlled company, La Continentale; there are doubtless some outstanding films produced by French companies (*Vautrin* for instance), which have not been shown outside France. *Le Corbeau* is a film of unrelieved unpleasantness in a small French village. Its moral points to the evils resulting from the writing of anonymous letters. It paints the French as a nation of self-seeking, hypocritical, mean and cowardly men and women, and is perhaps a foretaste of what France might have become if Pétain had had his way. *Pierre et Jean* is an impeccably acted version of the Maupassant story. Of the German films *Baron Munchausen* in technicolour is worth seeing. The tendentious *Story of the Titanic* is a delightful example of the boomerang effect of bad propaganda.

In the theatre the Swiss have been obliged to borrow from abroad. *Sodom and Gomorrah*, Girodoux's last play, was produced both at Geneva and at Zurich. It is a cynical and unlovely play, and interested only a restricted public. Far more popular was Thornton Wilder's *Skin of your Teeth*, which played to enthusiastic houses in the Zurich Stadttheater. It is surprising that no London management has dared to put on this highly topical and entertaining piece of Surrealism without tears. If Zurich can take it surely London can. The most popular play all over Switzerland has been the dramatization of the *Moon is Down*. It did not gain by being transferred to the stage, but its popularity was symptomatic of the intense disapproval of the Germans and admiration for the Allies which existed in spite of official policy. The play especially appealed to the Swiss because it expressed the way they hoped they themselves would have behaved had they been invaded in 1940. The censor forbade the production until late 1943 for fear of upsetting the Germans, and a nice neutral touch was added to the Basle production, where the invading troops were dressed in British battledress and tin hats.

Zurich alone of all the Swiss towns maintains a high musical tradition. The Opera House, where the principals are mainly drawn from Central Europe, has a broad repertoire, which included last spring an interesting production of Berlioz' *Faust*,

performed with costumes and scenery. The concert goer is almost spoiled for choice, such is the profusion of recitals, chamber music and symphony concerts.

In literature, as in the theatre, the Swiss have published and imported books from abroad, but have produced little themselves. It is true that like ourselves and unlike France, the Swiss have not had much leisure during the war. Servants still exist it is true, but men have been continuously called up to do their quota of military service, and there are all sorts of organizations which correspond to our A.T.S., W.V.S. and C.D. This may account in both our countries for our gelded muses. From England there has been a constant trickle of books, mainly political: Carr, Laski, Beveridge, but the Faber Poets were on sale, and the latest Huxley and Virginia Woolf. There was also a small collection of English War Poets, put out by Pierre Courthion in Geneva. Most books in English came from Swiss or Swedish publishers, who seem to be ousting Tauchnitz with beautifully produced paper-backed editions of popular novels: *Howard Spring*, *Steinbeck*, *Ann Bridge*, etc. All the new French books were available and many which were banned in France. Gide's *Imaginary Interviews* was published in Geneva, likewise *Domaine Français*, an omnibus of contemporary French writing. This has now been followed by *Domaine Russe*. The poems of Aragon and Eluard appeared in fine editions. An excellent political account of the debacle was translated from the Swedish; it was the work of a Swedish journalist, Victor Vinde, and was called in French *La Fin d'une Grande Puissance?* and in German *Ein Grossmacht fällt*. From Sweden came the best factual resistance story yet: *Je suis une Norwégienne*<sup>1</sup> and from Russia an exceedingly interesting novel, published in 1940, called *Wir haben alles noch vor uns*. It pictures the everyday life of a Leningrad factory director. He is married to an orthodox Communist Party member, whom he has long outgrown intellectually, and who acts as an Aunt Sally for attacks on the conventional communist dogma. The director is interested in Art, and through contact with an outcast Tsarist artist, is brought to realize the emptiness and vulgarity of contemporary Russian painting. It is not a great novel, but it is one of those rare pictures of contemporary life in Russia which would be of outstanding interest in this country today. That this book should appear in Switzerland

<sup>1</sup> Norway is my country, by S. Christensen. Published by Collins

and not here is typical of a certain facility the Swiss have for selecting the right moment for publishing a new translation or a topical book, or play. A fine biography of Nansen has just appeared and a new German translation of Voltaire's *Charles XII*, a book far too little known in this country, where a cunningly illustrated translation would soon be out of print, for Voltaire's story of Russian Glory under Peter the Great is fascinating to compare with the historical repeat under Stalin.

During the war the Swiss have been forced to trade almost entirely with Axis countries. The tourist trade has almost come to a standstill. Watches, clocks and jewellery are stocked ready for export, hotels and ski lifts are getting ready for the return of the tourist. In the meantime everything Anglo-Saxon is fashionable. Young men dress up to look like American aviators, they smoke cigarettes called Master, Jonny, or Champion, and are encouraged by advertisements to wear 'Jockey Feeling Unterwäsche' and 'Nabholz Airdress', while the girls are offered a deodorant called, inexplicably, 'Second Wind'. But the hospitable Swiss are really looking forward to seeing their English friends again, and this does not merely spring from a desire to see good Swiss francs changing hands, but in almost every case it is an affair of personal regard for some individual English traveller. The skis and boots you may have left behind in 1938, have been well waxed and looked after, and you can be sure of a rousing welcome from all your Swiss friends when you go back. Whatever the individual Swiss may say, life in Switzerland has probably been less affected by the war than in any other European country, and to a great extent this has been due to the good sense and hard work of the Swiss people. There is no doubt which side they have been backing, in fact at one stage of the war one got the impression that the average Swiss felt that the chief Allied war aim was to liberate Switzerland from Axis encirclement. They genuinely like the British and Americans, whom they feel they know. They are terrified of the Russians whom they think they know. Switzerland hopes to contribute to European peace and in directing Red Cross affairs, and as protecting power in many foreign capitals she has shown herself capable of managing the affairs of others as efficiently as she manages her own. She has no other national ambitions or pretensions. She knows that for food and for ideas she is dependent on other

countries. She hopes to reap great advantages because she has largely maintained her pre-war structure. But for this very reason there is a danger that in the long run she may find herself left far behind other countries, a European Museum Piece, a country in search of its revolution.

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## SELECTED NOTICE

*Noblesse Oblige*. By James Agate. Horne and Van Thal. 3s. 6d. net.  
‘WELL moused, lion!’

For some months now, dire threats have been heard, as to what Mr. Agate would do when he pounced on a certain object of his wrath. He has pounced, with a squeal and a flurry, but the prey is unharmed. *Noblesse Oblige* is, however, an interesting human document. It is not interesting because it has any intellectual importance—it has none. It is interesting merely because it shows to what a pass a wish to march with the band, and an infection of mass hysteria bring a man. Working himself up into a state of religious fervour, for no reason, Mr. Agate has turned himself into a focus for nit-wits, as a burning-glass is a focus for the sun. And now people whose time is valuable, must waste it in writing about the burning-glass in question, because it is detrimental to the eyesight.

What, you will inquire, is all the trouble about? The trouble, and Mr. Agate’s bad attack of hysteria, arose because Sir Osbert Sitwell, a man who has been a professional soldier, and who fought in the Grenadier Guards during the last war, at a time when conscription was not in force—hates conscription. So do many other men of high principles and courage, thinking it not only bad, but useless.

This ex-soldier wrote, recently, a work which he called *Letter to My Son*: this appeared, first in HORIZON, and then in book-form. It was largely a discussion of the problems of the artist in wartime. So might a plumber discuss the problems of the plumber. For that reason, and for that alone, he discussed the sufferings of the artist, and not the sufferings of the ‘ordinary man’ (as Osbert Sitwell prefers to call him, giving the lead in this matter to Mr. Agate, who has now adopted the phrase). In *Letter to My Son* Osbert Sitwell wrote these words:

‘If, in States vowed to death and to fights to a finish, the lot of everyman is, of course, hard, that of the artist is abominable. Here, unless some special status is allowed him, as elsewhere, it will mean, in fact, that he becomes a helot. Had Mozart been a modern Englishman—or, for that, a modern Austrian, he would have spent the last four years training to fight, fighting, or engaged in forced labour; and, since he died at thirty-six, this would have constituted a large slice of his art-life. *Conceive the loss to the world had conscription been in force.*’ The italics are mine. Later in the book (on page twenty-six) Osbert Sitwell says ‘... because I think that, in spite of the envenomed fanatics who find in these tragic years their happy hour, we shall return to the purely English methods of life, that we have through the

centuries evolved, I find it difficult to believe that we shall continue to enforce conscription after the war.'

This man who was a professional soldier believes, rightly or wrongly, that men conscripted do not fight as well as those who fight of their own free will.

Mr. Agate, perceiving immediately (from the passage on Mozart) that this former officer in the Grenadier Guards—(not a notoriously non-combatant regiment)—is so sub-humanly heartless, so mad, so blind, that he who saw the agonies and the death of the ordinary man in battle, and risked them himself, cares nothing about that agony and death, as long as a few willowy and cultivated persons can make a few 'pretty things.'

Amazing, and yet the accused man has fought through the whole of his writing life, on the side of the under-dog—and at the cost of many public outcries against him. This man is also, it seems, Mr. Agate's 'old friend.'

CHORUS (*Tempo di Valse*)

'We're dear old pals, jolly old pals,

Clinging together in all sorts of weather.'

Now, however, the waltz has ceased, Mr. Agate no longer clings. Yet it is strange that the old pal can be so misrepresented—simply because he understands the agony of one whose great message can never be delivered. The disgusting suggestion is made, therefore, that Osbert Sitwell wishes the artist to take shelter at the expense of the ordinary man.

Osbert Sitwell thinks, and I think, that the artist owes a duty to his country. But so, we hold, does the statesman. Who is to say that this war could not have been prevented? And this *not* by giving way to Germany and allowing her to continue on her path of infamy and horror, but in one of several other ways. Statesmen are allowed a special status, together with clergymen and other persons who are supposed to think for the nation. It may be said that statesmen are usually over military age. If this be so, they should think before they involve the nation in a war in which they cannot fight.

The great artist does more to civilize the minds of mankind than any other man—more than any excepting a few great saints.

In Mr. Agate's pamphlet there is the usual parrot-cry, dating from the 'nineties, about the Ivory Tower. It is a great impertinence to a writer of Osbert Sitwell's calibre to speak of the Ivory Tower in his connection. Mr. Agate should bring the accusation against the right people—his own pets, the writers of drawing-room comedies whose view embraces nothing but trivial impertinences! It is enough to aggravate a saint to hear Mr. Agate suggesting that 'the old pal' wishes a young man to be excused military service 'because he has composed an unintelligible poem or painted a picture of three sardines swimming in a top-hat and called "Barcarolle".' Who suggested this? It is a great impertinence to a writer of Osbert Sitwell's calibre to impute such a suggestion to him. Again, what great artist ever believed that 'great art can be produced only if the artist holds himself aloof from the crowd'?

What utter bosh! I will not say, as Mr. Agate does, on page twenty-five 'J'vear hear such bosh'—this being evidently Mr. Agate's version of how men who work with their hands, talk. (Do they? I spend a large part of my life among them, but I have never heard them say that, and it is a poor compliment to put it into their mouths.) I will not say this, because what I share with people,

is what Emerson called 'the larger imbibing of the common heart'—and not and imbecile debasement of language. But then, as Mr. Agate declares with pride, he has 'little or no belief in the power of education'.

I am sorry to hear that. If, as Mr. Agate believes, the people are really uneducatable then democracy is nothing but a state dedicated to the Lowest Common Denominator. But let me point out that it is Mr. Agate, and not Osbert Sitwell, who has propounded that theory. The truth is that Mr. Agate's book is almost unanswerable, because, with the exception of valuable quotations from Baudelaire and Montaigne, it is either sloppily sentimental or just plumb silly. Usually it is both, as when on page eleven, he writes 'I say that the *soil itself* is worth living and dying for'. This sounds very beautiful. But otherwise there is no distinction to be found between this statement and one of Mr. Noel Coward's later songs. Mr. Agate ought to write poems for Mother Day.

Mr. Agate, in his muddle-headed way, declared that 'the national game has moved the Ordinary Man more than all the poets together'. Well, who wants to take this healthy pleasure away from him? Not I. But I must point out that pleasures that are *not* healthy—cocaine for instance, have moved many. Does this mean that cocaine is of more worth than the plays of Shakespeare, the symphonies of Beethoven? Oh head of wood! (and there has been much discussion in my family as to whether that head should be used as a bat or as a ball . . . I want it to be a ball . . .) it is not the loss of personal ecstasy that the great artist laments, it is the ineffable loss of what he has to give the world.

But then, Mr. Agate's spiritual values are hopelessly muddled. On page 14 of this bewildering little book, we find these words: 'The soldier who disobeys an order in battle, risks only his life; the golfer who disobeys his caddie risks his hole.' It is almost impossible to review Mr. Agate's self-exposure, for the reason that one can follow neither his arguments nor his train of thought. At one moment he seems to mean one thing, at another exactly the opposite.

Here is an example of his clear thinking. On page 4, Mr. Agate declares: 'I have every moral and spiritual authority for forcing them' (people in general, I suppose) 'to give their lives in accordance with something which is within every man's ken—duty to the country which gave him birth'. On page 25, however, we read that 'no German loves fighting for its own sake, he wants to goosestep and die in battle for the glory of the Fatherland'.

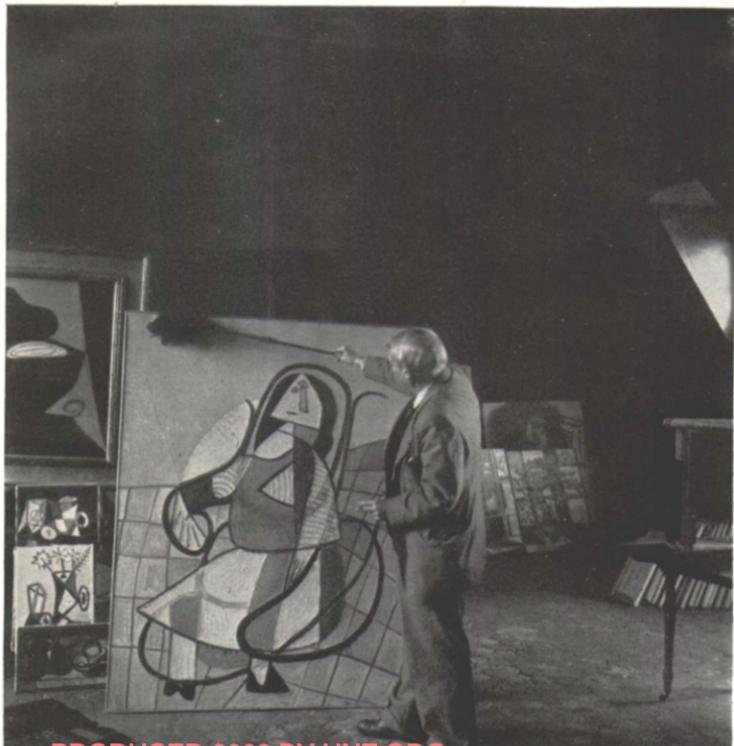
What are we to deduce from that? It reads as if Mr. Agate thinks the evil German is like the good Englishman. But no, it cannot mean that. Can it perhaps bear a meaning only dimly perceived by poor Mr. Agate in his hysteria, i.e. that it is a dangerous ideal when a country is badly ruled?

But this inconsistency fades into nothing compared with the following example, on pages 8 and 9. Mr. Agate says, 'obviously a wise Government will not put a bayonet into the hands of a William Walton, a Constant Lambert, a Clifford Curzon, a Noel Coward, a John Gielgud, or a Tommy Trinder'. Then what on earth is all the fuss about? If Mr. Agate's views are these, why rail at Osbert Sitwell for asking us to 'imagine the loss to the world had conscription been in force' during Mozart's short life? Or are we to understand from Mr. Agate that the loss to the world of Mr. Noel Coward's songs would be greater than the loss of the works of Mozart and Shakespeare?

The book is one mass of incomprehension. To Mr. Agate, because Osbert



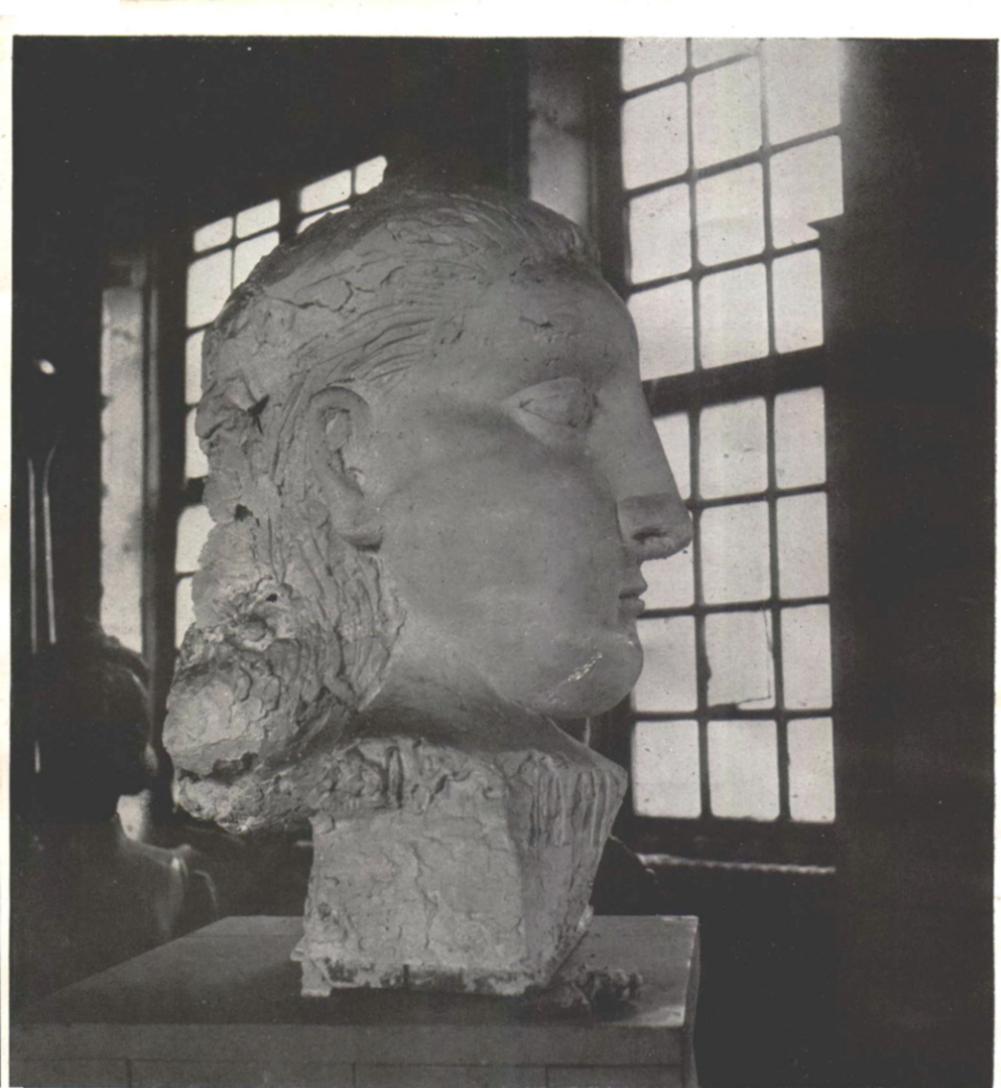
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Picasso's studio, 1944, by CECIL BEATON



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Sitwell did not believe one palpably hysterical atrocity story, he does not believe those that are authenticated. And, what is more, he does not care! An amazing charge to bring against a man of heart, imagination, and experience!

But to turn to another matter. It seems that Syd, Ern, and Charley, and some golfers, and his discarded old friend Sir Osbert Sitwell, are not Mr. Agate's only pals, there is also another gentleman, addicted to age-old shock-tactics in conversation—squibs that got damp in Noah's Flood.

'It is my privilege', Mr. Agate declares, 'to know a captain of industry whose brain controls the destinies of the greater part of a million men. He told me quite frankly that he should not worry if St. Paul's were bombed. "I should replace it with sky-scrapers for the people who will be needed to put the reconstruction plans into action. Or just warehouses."

We heard, twenty or thirty years ago, about the beauty of utility, the beauty of sky-scrapers, from Messieurs Le Corbusier and Jean Cocteau. But as neither of these gentlemen had addled brains, they did not talk this disgusting nonsense about St. Paul's. Perhaps it was this gentleman, as well as Mr. Alington, who taught Mr. Agate to address the sons of the workers as Syd, Ern, and Charley. A habit that surprises me. I should be displeased if anyone addressed me as 'Ede', and I see no reason to suppose that people who were not born in my exact circumstances have any less dignity or dislike of familiarity.

I will tell Mr. Agate a fact that he would know if he mixed more with people who work with their hands. They do not like to be patronized. They resent it.

I will tell him something else. He need not defend the 'ordinary man' against a man who has always fought for the liberty of the human race. EDITH SITWELL

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